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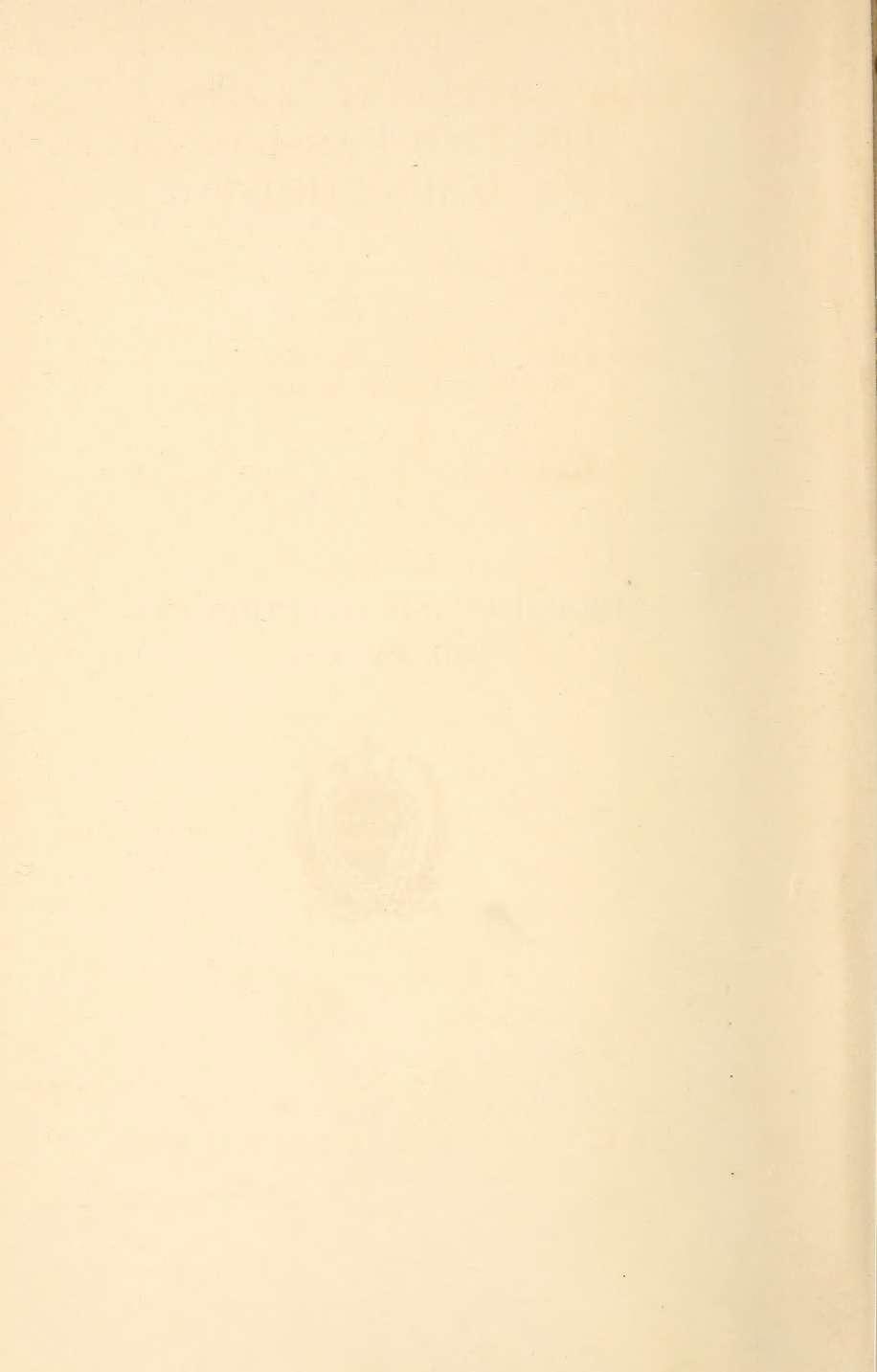






THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS ON  
THE PASSION.







# THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

TAKEN FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE WRITINGS  
OF THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

*By Fra Gaetano M. da Bergamo, Capuchin*

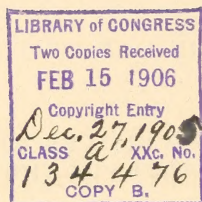
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*Archbishop of New York*

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To His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons,

*Archbishop of Baltimore,*

THE NEW TRANSLATION

OF

THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION  
OF JESUS CHRIST

IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE

PASSIONIST FATHERS OF THE

UNITED STATES



## FOREWORD.

IN bringing out a new translation of Fra Gaetano M. da Bergamo's *THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST*, a few explanatory remarks may not be amiss.

Our primary object is to rescue from oblivion a valuable work that has for many years been out of print. In the second place, by its reproduction to increase devotion to the sacred Passion of our crucified Redeemer.

By graciously accepting the dedication of our new translation of Father Bergamo's popular treatise, Cardinal Gibbons has added another link to the chain of affectionate gratitude that binds the Passionists of the United States to His Eminence. At all times he has been to them a devoted friend. In their manifold labors throughout the country, they have ever found in him a kind adviser and zealous patron,—a true father and guide.

The hierarchy, the clergy, religious, as also the laity, devout to the Passion of our blessed Lord, will, we trust, read this new translation with profit to their souls in this life and for the life to come.

ST. MICHAEL'S RETREAT, WEST HOBOKEN, N. J.,  
Feast of St. Paul of the Cross, 1905.





## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

IN this little work I have drawn out reflections on the Passion of Jesus Christ for every day of the year, but I could find no title properly to express its character and object. At last I decided to use the words "*Thoughts and Affections*," which to me appeared the most appropriate. I had a reason for not wishing to call it a book of meditations; namely, that it might the more readily be perused by certain persons who imagine that thinking is common to all, but that meditation belongs only to a few, and who on this supposition throw aside as unfit for them any spiritual book offered under the name of meditations.

There is no doubt that meditation, if rightly understood, means something more than thinking; for we say of our mind that it thinks even when it wanders and is distracted and apprehends objects present to it but superficially. Whilst it cannot be said to meditate, unless with mature deliberation it ruminates and penetrates things, so as to arrive, under the guidance of reason, at a knowledge of some truth. Nevertheless, though these *Thoughts* are, in fact, real meditations, I do not call them by that name, because meditation always requires labor and study; whereas, if any one desires to make use of this work, he will not be obliged to draw for himself from the holy mysteries contemplated the practical truths by which he should regulate his life, since he will find in it, well prepared, what his understanding would be forced to do by means of considerations, reflections, and reasoning.

We must observe that meditation to bear fruit must be accompanied with prayer. Therefore, it is important that we correct the mistake of those who imagine that meditation and mental prayer are identical. No; meditation is one thing, prayer another. In meditation we exercise the

understanding; in prayer, the will. In meditation the soul is recollected in itself; in prayer it is lifted up to God. In meditation the mind is occupied with thoughts; in prayer the heart is excited to affections. You may meditate as long as you please and upon the most sublime subjects; but such meditation will be of small profit if you do not proceed to prayer by producing affections suitable to your thoughts. Meditation is necessary as a preparation for prayer, since it is by means of thoughts that the affections are awakened and inflamed. On the other hand, prayer is requisite to give to meditation its efficacy and fruit. This is the end of meditation, that the will should be moved, then the affections, so that the truth may not only be known, but loved. Hence the errors of those heretics who dared assert that there was no necessity either to apply our thoughts to the Passion of Jesus Christ, or to exercise our affections upon it, have been condemned.

What, then, is the proper definition of prayer? Simply this: As meditation is to think seriously on the things of God, so prayer is the devout turning of oneself to God by pious and humble affections. Praising, admiring, adoring God; fearing and loving God; trusting and hoping in God; humbling and resigning oneself to God; delighting in God; grieving over the offences committed against God; compassionating the Man-God in His pains and ignominies; endeavoring to imitate Him. All this is prayer, because it is a turning of oneself to God by the affections of the will. And as meditation no less than prayer should be directed to the well-ordering of our life, which consists in shunning evil and adhering to good; so, in a general way, we may say of affections, that they are various movements of the will,—loving, desiring, seeking, and resolving either to acquire some virtue or to correct or avoid some vice.

This, therefore, is the substance of these *Thoughts and Affections on the Passion of Jesus Christ*. You will find in them no high flights of the soul by way of contemplation. I have followed the wise counsel of holy directors, who taught me that it is better to keep on the level ground



with safety, with merit, and with fruit, than to soar aloft to certain heights, which may perhaps afford more pleasure, but where assuredly there is more obscurity and danger. We can never work enough, and we shall never work in vain, at eradicating vice and acquiring virtue; and to this end alone the *Thoughts and Affections* of this book are directed.

Among vices, I have endeavored in an especial way to attack and mortify pride, which is nothing else than an inordinate love of self, and the mother and source of all vices; among virtues, I have chosen humility and charity:—one being the groundwork and foundation of all virtues; the other, their crown and perfection. Moreover, I have striven to instil into the soul those sentiments that may be most effectual and useful in humbling it before God, and advancing it in His love.

According as the various mysteries present themselves, I have taken occasion to inculcate the avoidance of other vices, and the love of other virtues; but I have endeavored to deduce from the *Thoughts and Affections* those fruits that suit all classes, making no allusion to the manifold duties of different states of life, but considering simply the state of a good Christian: so that wherever any one may open the book, he can not say, *This does not apply to me*. Each part suits everybody; for if every state of life has its special obligations, the love or the fear of God suffices to secure their exact fulfilment. Be the reader a religious or a secular, single or married, noble or plebeian, a superior or a subject,—humility, faith, hope, charity, patience, penance, prayer, contrition, mortification, obedience, resignation to the will of God—all these virtues are necessary for all; and they are what I shall treat of, in a way suitable to all, without entering into the detail of various particular and private practices.

I have subdivided the mysteries into three hundred and sixty-five sections, one for each day of the year, since there is no day on which, according to the figure of the Old Law left us by the Holy Ghost, our heart should not be inflamed

with devotion to the Saviour's Passion. I have marked neither the months nor the days, fearing that any one who follows the order of the days, in case he should omit this devout exercise for a few days, would pass over some point that perchance may be particularly necessary for him. If it please God, I shall bring out a set of *Thoughts and Affections for the Principal Solemnities*. Meanwhile, it will be advisable for me to make a few remarks concerning these *Thoughts on the Passion*.

I. They might have been divided into three parts. In the first of which might be represented the Passion of the Heart of Jesus, tortured with an infinitude of most painful objects, and suffering an excess of sorrow for the sins of the world. In the second, the Passion of His mind, afflicted and humbled by the pressure of the shameful outrages and ignominies which He endured. In the third, the Passion of His body, tormented in every part by most excruciating and unspeakable pains. However, I have preferred to follow the order of the Gospel history, exhibiting, nevertheless, according to circumstances, the character of a true penitent, who should be contrite of heart, through sorrow for his sins; humble in mind, through confusion for having sinned; mortified in his passions and senses, to satisfy for past transgressions and to guard against committing them anew.

II. The object of the *Thoughts and Affections* is the Passion of Jesus, either interior or exterior. Now, I am well aware that the interior Passion, not having in it anything to touch the senses, is not understood by all, however clearly it may be explained; yet it is not on that account to be omitted, because not only is there in it beauty and grandeur, which, although above our power of expression to describe, are nevertheless charming; but it has for this very reason been concealed, that we may be moved to dwell upon it with more ingenuity. Moreover, like the manna enclosed in the golden urn, and placed within the Ark and the Sanctuary, it deserves no less that we should with our affections relish its sweetness, than that we should

adore its mysteries. Again, as in the exercise of these *Thoughts and Affections* we always contemplate the Divinity united to the Humanity, so likewise we ought always to have in view the exterior Passion joined to the interior.

III. In short, the whole trend of these *Thoughts and Affections* is to give a literal, moral, and mystic commentary, to lead the mind to the understanding of the Gospel history of the Passion of Jesus Christ in its three principal phases. I have endeavored to follow in everything the sentiments of Holy Scripture, and of the Fathers, and I have quoted the sentences to which I refer, in order to show that in my work there is little or nothing of my own. This I have done with a view to gain more fruit from my labors, being perfectly convinced that every thought and affection will obtain more credit and esteem from being old, than it would from being new; and will be ruminated with more devotion for having sprung from the mind and heart of a venerable Father, eminent for learning and sanctity, than were it the artificial product of my flighty head, or an affected expression of feeling from my tepid heart. Therefore, I entreat any one that has a decided inclination for holy things, to glance kindly at these quotations when they occur; and I promise him that he will find in the Latin text far more delight and unction than in my insipid and crude version.<sup>1</sup>

IV. With regard to these texts, I consider it superfluous to apologize to critics for having followed antiquity, according to the *Summa* of St. Thomas and the works of the Fathers, without remarking in my references what works are reckoned doubtful by the learned, or whether the editions from which I quote are old or new, as these same learned masters are well aware that an exemption from the rigor of these laws is granted to one who writes to gratify, not genius, but devotion, and, moreover, who writes on the most religious and devout of topics.

(<sup>1</sup>) It has been thought proper in this new translation to suppress the Latin quotations here referred to by the Author, in order that the work may be more acceptable to the generality of readers. *Translator's Note.*



V. With respect to the *Thoughts*, as the mystical history of the Passion is briefly given by the Evangelists, we ought to look on every word in the holy Gospel as like that grain of mustard mentioned by Our Lord in the parable, in itself of small size, but in reality containing virtue exceeding great, and so calculated, when sown by wisdom, to grow and spread without limits. There is no word on which various thoughts may not be produced: but great caution is requisite not to give to these thoughts more weight than authority and reason assign them. When a fact is related in the Gospel, and the manner of it is not explained, there is no doubt that, with due limitations, we may either represent it to ourselves or describe it to others in such a way as appears to us the most suitable, the most probable, and most proper to inspire devotion. But we must always use prudent discretion, and remember that what is not clearly stated in Holy Scripture is not to be received for more than it is worth,—a simple pious thought of our own.

VI. As to the mode of expression made use of in these *Thoughts* the reader must again recollect, that many forms of expression are tolerated in an ascetic book, though not precisely correct according to the literal exactness of the Schools. It would be unreasonable to insist on nicely weighing, with the scales of speculative theology, certain mystical phrases which are only used in a familiar way, as they have been by not a few of the Fathers, thus intended to edify the mind, and awaken holy affections in the heart. Still more, considering that he who writes for the good of souls, far from wishing to depart from the opinion of the holy Catholic Church, purposes rather to submit his every word, whatever it may be, to Her, as to the criterion of right and wrong.

I ought to devote some pages in the outset to stating the marvelous and abundant fruits that are reaped by daily offering some attentive thoughts and devout affections on the Passion of Jesus Christ. But we say all that has been said by the Fathers, when we remark that this is a most

efficacious means to preserve us from evil, and to obtain for us all the treasures of grace in this present life, and of glory in eternity. Therefore, I shall only give two points of advice on the subject of the Passion to any one that desires to make a profitable use of the *Thoughts and Affections*.

The first is, that he should look on the Passion, not as an ancient, distant event, that took place many years ago in Jerusalem; but as something transpiring at the present time, and actually seen with our own eyes. In the same way as we frequently picture to ourselves a person as present who is far away. How often will a mother, whose son is dead, form in her mind, after many years, so lively an image of him that she seems to see him in such or such a circumstance, as if he were really present there! How often will a lover represent to himself as visible, and converse familiarly with the object of his passion, though she is actually in some distant land, yet to his imagination she is, as it were, truly in his company! Now what nature, and not unfrequently sin, is wont to do, why should not piety also readily perform with respect to Our Lord Jesus Christ? As Abraham figured to himself the Saviour present many ages before He came into the world, so no less may we conceive Him present to us many ages after His coming, for in all ages the Saviour is one and the same; since one and the same is the faith of Abraham and ours,—an eternal faith, embracing all ages. As Abraham saw the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was—in the time to come, and saw it by an act of faith, which rendered it present to him; so by an act of faith we also can behold it, and bring it before us, though it happened in times past.

That great mystery, which was ordained by the wisdom of God to renew the old man in us, is in itself new; that Passion can never be said to grow old which is not liable to decay, and which continually buds forth for us, and bears fruits of eternal life. This is the true way to meditate and pray; that is, to imagine to ourselves, by the light of holy faith, that Jesus Christ is before us in the very position in

which each mystery of His life represents Him, exactly as if we beheld Him with our eyes, either sweating blood in the garden, fainting beneath the scourges, writhing with the pain of the thorns or the nails, etc. It is by a tranquil, and not forced, action of the imagination that this ideal presence is produced. But it is by faith and thoughts and affections that merit and profit are drawn from it.

The second advice is to consider this sacred Passion, not as though it were in the air, making speculations upon it of little or no utility, but with a view to practise, so that our thoughts may be as so many proximate preparations for those affections which lead to resolutions and purposes to put into action the virtue proposed for our contemplation. It is not enough simply to think of what Jesus Christ suffered; but, in order that the thought may make a profound impression and move the soul, we must reflect that all His pains were undergone especially for us. Because, although in general He suffered for all, He at the same time suffered in such a manner for each one of us, as though each one had been the only sinner in the world. Hence, we are bound to say with the Apostle: The Son of God hath loved me, and hath given His life for me; He has suffered no less for me individually than He has suffered in general for all the sons of Adam. Moreover, if He suffered only in general for sinners, I am the greatest sinner in His sight, being the most wicked and most ungrateful of all.

There is a point that should be well understood. Namely, that the benefit of our common Redemption belongs in particular to each one of us, because it is from this reflection that the strongest motives spring, and the soul feels itself most strictly bound to be grateful and faithful to its Redeemer. To assist our understanding this point, we have a striking and expressive figure in the sun, which shines not more for all men than for one man alone, and not less for one than it does for all. The sun enlightens the world, but its light, diffused as it is over all places, is not in consequence diminished in my regard. I enjoy the fulness of it, as though in the whole world there was no



one else but myself. And so it is of Jesus Christ, the true Sun of Justice, we all and each ought to say: He suffered not one pain or one wound in His Humanity which He did not suffer strictly for me. He shed not one drop of blood which was not shed for me. And I am His debtor for the whole of His Passion, as though He had endured it, not for others, but solely for me, to merit for me remission of sins, deliverance from hell, reconciliation with God, eternal happiness.

It is true of God that, with His entire, undivided presence, He watches over, preserves, and assists me, as if there were no other creature in heaven or on earth, as if He had no concern but to care for me. And it is no less true of Jesus Christ, that in all His pains, interior as well as exterior, He thought of and loved me, as if He had no one else to redeem but myself, and that He applied all His merits in the same way as in the Most Holy Sacrament, which is a memorial of His Passion, He communicates Himself wholly to all, as well as to me.

Who can tell what sweet, holy, and salutary affections will be awakened by fixing the mind with these strong, touching thoughts on the Passion? In the present work I give but the seeds of these thoughts and affections. Whoever shall sow these seeds, shall find by experience what a harvest he will reap; the praise and glory of which, as of all things, be given to the Incarnate Wisdom who opens the mouths of the dumb, and makes use of the weakest and most helpless instruments to effect His grandest marvels. Let those who read this work, in charity remember me in their prayers, that, in the mercy of God, what I hope through the merits of Jesus Christ may prove profitable to others, may likewise be of avail to my eternal salvation.



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## Thoughts and Affections on the Passion

### CHAPTER I.

#### JESUS CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION TO THE APOSTLES.

I. JESUS CHRIST had repeatedly foretold His bitter Passion to His Apostles. Let us observe what effect this had upon them. He speaks of His Passion after Peter had confessed Him to be the Son of God, and He does this to animate all to imitate Him by carrying their cross with patience; since no one can hereafter come with Him to the enjoyment of His glory who is unwilling to suffer here with Him. But what does Peter do? Whether it be from a temptation of Satan, or from a sentiment of tenderness and love, he undertakes to contradict Him, maintaining that so ignominious a Passion is not becoming the Son of the living and eternal God.

Again, on another occasion Jesus Christ speaks of His Passion to His Apostles, on their return from Galilee to Jerusalem; and gives them a detail of the pains and outrages which he is about to endure, in order that, from the humiliations of a God, they too may learn to be humble. What is the effect produced? Two of them, James and John, are filled with vain, ambitious ideas of rising to dignities and preferments; so that Our Saviour is forced to rebuke them, and to give them to understand that His kingdom is for those alone that humble themselves.

Let us reflect how the like happens in our own case; and if the Apostles might be allowed some excuse, because the mystery of the Cross was, as yet, not understood by them, what excuse can be made for us, if we draw no advantage from reflections on the Passion? I, too, by my meditations intend to obtain mortification and humility; but how frequently do I find myself, either by my self-love or by the devil, drawn in the opposite direction! Although in

every phase of His Passion Jesus Christ speaks to my heart, and tells me that I should learn of Him humility, how often, notwithstanding, do I swell with self-conceit, how full am I of vanity, of presumption, how sensitive!

O sweet Redeemer, fortify me, I beseech Thee, with Thy spirit, that I may conquer and subdue this repugnance to suffering, which is in me. When the question arises of denying myself such and such desires, which savor too much of self, on the one side, I know my duty well enough; but, on the other, I find myself weak and pusillanimous, and a mere trifle prevents the execution of Thy holy inspirations. Above all, that pride of mine, how great it is! I know no one—no! not one—who possesses greater lights or stronger motives, than what faith in Thy sacred Passion affords me, for the practice of humility. Most sweet Jesus! most loving Jesus! Master of true patience and of solid humility! teach me these virtues which Thou Thyself hast vouchsafed to practise. Do not suffer Thy Passion to be without fruit in me. Prostrate at the feet of Thy Majesty, I implore Thee to grant me the grace to meditate with profit upon it.

I will take this as a maxim, that without humility and patience I shall not be saved. I shall be patient, if I am humble; and I shall be humble, if I thoroughly endeavor to know my miseries.

II. Another time, when the multitude were in astonishment at the miracles which they saw Him work, Jesus Christ speaks of His Passion to His Apostles, and says to them: *You know that after two days shall be the Pasch, and the Son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified.*<sup>1</sup> This He says to them, that they might know that nothing could befall Him against His will, and that it all would happen by His own free choice. Moreover, that when they should behold Him dying on the cross, they might understand and remember that He is the God-Man. Our Saviour could not make use of clearer expressions in order to impress upon their minds this great mystery; and yet they

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 2.

understood no more of what He said than if they had been blind and destitute of sense.

Jesus Christ again speaks of His Passion, saying openly that He would be betrayed and mocked and scourged and spit upon and put to death, as had been predicted of Him in the Scripture. But again they did not understand; and, conceiving it to be said as a metaphor or parable, they distort the sense, and imagine it means anything but His approaching Passion—which in reality it does mean. Hence, we find them perpetually contending with one another for preëminence, and not striving to obtain humility, which is the virtue that their divine Master intends to inculcate on them.

We will not stop to discover how this happened with respect to the Apostles, but we will at once turn our reflections upon ourselves. Am I not, as a general thing, like them when I read or meditate upon the most holy Passion of Our Lord? Am I not stupid, dull, without sense or understanding? While reflecting who it is that suffers, why He suffers, and for whom, I can not find in myself a spark of feeling, as though my faith were entirely dead. And who can say whether this darkness in my mind, this hardness of my heart, be not actually the result of that awful punishment with which the reprobate are threatened,—that they shall be deprived of understanding the mysteries of salvation?

I fear it, O my God! and I have just reason to fear it on account of my sins; but I cry to Thee for mercy, O Thou Light of souls! and I implore Thee to enlighten my darkness. True it is, that I am most unworthy of Thy light; but I promise that, with Thy assistance, I shall abuse it no longer, but employ it faithfully to Thy honor. Open the eyes of my mind, take away the natural hardness of my heart, and give me the gift of understanding, that I may dwell with attention and devotion upon Thy sorrowful mysteries, and may be touched with compassion and compunction. I do not pray, and I know not how to pray. For, in truth, what manner of prayers are mine which

leave my passions within me more violent than before? My Jesus! Thou art good, and by the bowels of Thy most tender mercy I beseech Thee, teach me and help me with Thy most holy grace.

I shall recommend myself to the Most Blessed Virgin at the beginning and at the end of my meditations. I shall frequently humble myself at the consideration of my unworthiness,—as God is accustomed to bestow His gift of understanding on none but the humble.

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## CHAPTER II.

### CONSPIRACY OF THE JEWS AGAINST JESUS CHRIST.

I. JESUS CHRIST having raised Lazarus from the dead, and the fame of this miracle being noised abroad, as it was the last and most striking of all that He had wrought, having been for His own divine purposes expressly reserved for that precise time, many of the Jews acknowledged Him as the true Son of God and were converted. Certain persons, however, having at the same time gone to the Pharisees and reported the influence of Jesus Christ and the multitude of followers that He was gaining on account of this miracle, these Pharisees immediately come together in the house of Caiphas, with the rulers of the synagogue, to conspire against Him! At other times they endeavored to kill Him; now they intend to come to a final decision on the subject.

The truth of the miracle can neither be denied nor concealed; but this fact, instead of causing them to admire and revere Jesus Christ, has only the effect of driving these impious men to a still greater degree of exasperation and rage on account of the implacable hatred that they entertain for Him. Oh, to what will disorderly passions lead us! This is a point on which I must often reflect when I meditate on the Passion of Jesus Christ. What brought about His Passion, in the eyes of the world? It was a blind



passion in the rulers of the Jews. What was the cause of it, in the eyes of God? My sins—and whence spring all my sins but from my interior passions, and from that one in particular that in me dominates over all the affections of my heart?

We find, in reading the lives of the saints, that they all became saints by practising the mortification of their passions. But as for me, how frequently have I employed those very passions—of which the saints took advantage to become saints,—more miserable than the Jews, to conspire against Thee, O my God! Thou hast implanted these passions in my nature in order that I may have an opportunity from them to exercise myself in virtue, not to turn them into occasions and instruments of vice. From time to time I call these my passions to a consultation in my heart, as in the hall of Caiphas;—and what resolutions result from these consultations but to devise mortal offences against Thee? Ah! what remedy, what refuge shall I find?

Thou only, O my God! canst assist me in this matter. Therefore, I humbly entreat Thee to grant me this grace: that I may draw from the Passion of Jesus Christ the power to moderate my passions so that they may always be subject to reason and faith, and be ruled by Thy holy Commandments. My diseases are many and grievous, on account of the multiplicity of my evil inclinations; but Thy wisdom, Thy mercy, and Thy grace are far more powerful to help and strengthen me in good than I am to cast myself into evil. What I fear above all in myself is pride, because this evil is hidden from me; but do Thou, I entreat Thee, give me light and strength to combat the root and source of all my vices,—Thou who art the Master of humility, and the Director of the humble.

For the reason that I do not know my pride, I must endeavor to discover it by observing what are the thoughts, desires, intentions, and actions within me which I esteem the most virtuous.

II. The predominant passion which excites the Priests and Pharisees to hatred of Jesus Christ is envy. They see

that the people admire His miracles, and follow Him; and filled with jealous fears of losing the esteem and affection of these people, which are to them so abundant a source of wealth and profit, through mere envy, the malice of which was increased by avarice and ambition, they unanimously resolve to safeguard their own interests, by ridding the world of the holiest Man on earth.

What havoc does not envy make in souls! What evil does it not cause in the world! Even spiritual persons are not free from it;—and however much we may hear it condemned, still no one takes measures to be cured of it. Generally speaking, envy is regarded as an evil of little consequence. Hence, people do not fear it—they scarcely notice it. Nevertheless, it is true that, without being aware of it, we are drawing our eternal ruin from this source.

Let us probe the recesses of our own conscience, and perchance we shall find lurking there this evil passion, which, like a slow fever, makes us waste and pine away. On certain occasions, I ardently desire to meet with esteem and approbation from persons of my condition; and it happens that some one else—my equal or perhaps my inferior—is more esteemed, honored, and loved than myself. At this I experience displeasure and regret. In short, do I rejoice at every good, whatever it be, that my neighbor enjoys, with the same satisfaction as though it were my own? Charity demands and requires this of me, and every motion of my heart that is opposed to this charity is a veritable act of envy. This being the case, how do we stand, my soul, in the eyes of God?

I tremble, O my God, at the depravity of my heart. Oftentimes the good enjoyed by others makes me sad. At the same time, I flatter myself with the notion that this sadness is an effect of zeal. But where is my guarantee that it is not the outcome of envy,—and of envy so much the more refined, as it is hidden? Thou, O Lord, with Thy searching eyes, that penetrate the lowest depths of my heart, Thou seest this evil passion within me; while I make no account of it, neither accusing myself of it, nor using

any means to correct it. This blind envy obscures my sight; and, wretch that I am! while I might become a saint by the exercise of charity and find my happiness in the happiness of others, I prefer to make myself miserable at the sight of their happiness, and to throw myself into perdition with the wicked Jews. O my God! Thou teachest me, by Thy sacred word, that envy is a vice peculiar to the devil, who hates and persecutes man for no other cause than for the good that Thou doest to him;—grant me, then, Thy assistance to know and hate this abominable vice ever more and more.

In my daily examinations I shall reflect upon envy; and when I find myself in fault, I will repent and confess it. Moreover, I will resolve to guard against the occasions of it and to resist its first motions.

III. In this assembly of the chief priests and Pharisees, the especial accusations brought against Jesus Christ are His miracles. *What do we, they say, any longer to suffer this man, who works these wonders above all human power?*<sup>1</sup> They call to mind the blind restored to sight, the sick healed, the dead raised to life, and the multitude of other prodigies that He had performed for the public good; and from all this, which should have forced them to believe Jesus Christ to be the Messiah foretold by the prophets, they conclude that they must put Him to death. Was it ever heard that, in order to condemn a person to death, his good works were brought in evidence? In this manner they treat Jesus Christ, who stands condemned for His striking miracles.

Remark the blindness of these men. They longed, they prayed for the coming of the Messiah; and now that He is come, with all the marks by which He may be recognized, they reject Him, and with frenzied rage they consult together how to destroy Him. Behold in this a representation of what I myself do. I desire and I pray for humility, charity, patience, and the other virtues necessary for my eternal salvation; and when God answers my prayer by

(1) St. Luke xxiii.

sending me occasions, inspirations, helps for the actual practice of humility, charity, patience, and the rest, what do I do? I turn away from the occasion, I resist the inspiration, I despise the divine assistance. In every respect I act like those reprobate souls who are ungrateful and rebellious to the goodness of God. The Jews wished for a Messiah who should come to save them, without prejudice to their worldly interests or their unruly appetites. In like manner, I wish for everything that is requisite for my salvation, yet without denying my concupiscences and vicious inclinations.

What dost Thou say of me, O my God? Do I not imitate the Jews in my chimerical notions of desiring a Saviour to save me in my own way,—One that will bestow virtues upon me without my forsaking vice, and bring me to the kingdom of heaven without my doing violence to detach my affections from self and the world? O my God! grant that I may acknowledge Thy mercies and Thy graces, and, at the same time, realize my own malice, which is so thoroughly known to Thee. I desire to know it, only with a view to rid myself of it and to correct it by most strenuous efforts, made in spite of the difficulties placed in the way by my senses and my natural repugnances.

It is Thou, O Lord! who dost prevent and excite me to make Thee this prayer. Wilt Thou, therefore, abandon one who prays to Thee according to Thy good pleasure, and in Thy name? This prayer I make to Thee with all humility, that I may not, to my damnation, abuse those graces and helps which Thou dost give me for my salvation. It is impossible that I should be saved in any other way than that which my Saviour has taught me. That is, that I should endeavor, with a firm resolution, to follow my Saviour Jesus Christ in His doctrine and in His example. O Jesus, rejected by the Jews, be Thou ever loved, adored, and imitated by me!

I shall be unable to find an excuse at the divine tribunal for not having practised virtue from any want of grace. My own indolence will prove my guilt; and, as an idle,



unprofitable servant, I shall be condemned to eternal punishment.

IV. What the priests have to say against Jesus Christ is that if He is suffered to live all will believe in Him, and then the Romans will come and possess the country. But while the rest are occupied, each making the most of what he has to say, the high priest Caiphas stands up, and calling them all ignorant babblers, he decides that the principal motive for putting Jesus Christ to death is that it is expedient for the public good that He should die. It is immaterial to us, he says, whether He be innocent or what is the justice or law of the case, but simply what is best for us and most expedient. No sooner has he said this than all agree with him, and under a false pretext of zeal the fatal plot is formed.

Let us reflect that in these deliberations on the cause of Jesus Christ no regard is had to conscience; none to the fear of God. Nothing but their own interests and human respect is taken into account. Had they seen things in the true light, they would have found it immensely to their advantage to believe in the Messiah who had come to them. But because of their love for vanity, they reject Him and conspire against His person. Consequently, they forfeited all good—temporal and eternal.

Is not this precisely my way of acting? Whenever I am under the influence of some passion I invariably imagine that I have the best possible reasons on my side; and, determined to gratify my inclinations, I see no danger in the course that I adopt, and with certainty calculate on the most improbable chances in my favor. Again, every time that I commit sin, I follow after that which flatters my sensual appetites; and fancying that I shall be the gainer by adhering to some trifling point of honor sometimes, at others by indulging in some pleasure, or serving some petty interest, I am, in fact, all the time plotting with my passions the death of the Incarnate Son of God. It is myself that I love inordinately, when I love the conveniences and pleasures of this earthly life. And behold-

ing that it is my self-love that fascinates and blinds me and that is the cause of all my evils, what misery is this, that wherever I go this same self-love,—the greatest of all my enemies, must always accompany me!

But where, O my God! is my common sense, where is my faith, when I conceive a vain pleasure to be more advantageous to me than Thy most holy grace, than my own eternal salvation? What will all the consolations of this earth profit me, at the cost of offending Thee and injuring my own soul? Is it to my advantage to indulge in momentary pleasure in this world, and to suffer eternal torments in the other? O my God! give me an upright, prudent, and resolute spirit to guide myself ever by this great truth, that what is best and most profitable for me, is to be found in Thee alone—in Thee, my Sovereign Good, my All for time and eternity.

I shall consider what are my attractions and aversions, as it may easily happen that concerning them I deceive myself with erroneous opinions. God will judge the system of theology that I form to suit myself.

V. The council of the rulers of the synagogue was a cabal of wickedness against the life of the Sovereign Lord and Saviour of the world,—as the Prophet had foretold. Nevertheless, in it nothing was determined but what had been previously determined in heaven. Caiphas said that it was expedient that one man should die to save the people. This was precisely what had been arranged by the eternal decrees of God. For, all the sons of Adam having been condemned to death, there was no way to save them and set them free but by a Man-God dying for them. Caiphas said this in a perverse, wicked sense; but his malice answered the deep purposes of divine Wisdom, and nothing but what had been ordained from eternity was accomplished.

Reflect, my soul, that all this is known to Jesus—both what is transpiring against Him on earth, and what has been decreed in heaven. And, oh! with what submission does He bow down profoundly to adore the justice of God

in the injustice of men, while in His Heart He is occupied in acts of the most sublime virtues! A noble example is this for me, which I am bound to imitate. How often do I swell with indignation, complain, and am vexed, because some one speaks of or treats me injuriously; and when some misfortune happens to me, I am sad and disquieted. Whence comes this? Solely from my living without reflection, solely because I forget to raise my eyes, and consider that all this happens by a just, secret disposition of Providence.

O my God! the only Bestower of virtue, imprint deeply in my soul this truth of faith,—that Thy justice and Thy mercy should be adored in everything that Thou dost order. Now I resolve to humble myself beneath Thy almighty hand, and to submit unreservedly. This I should do; this I shall do. I fear only that I may not be constant in my resolution. I have had bitter experience of my instability. But do Thou help me, I pray, with the power of Thy grace. Hereafter, when anything shall occur to cross my inclinations, or to hurt my feelings, make me acknowledge it as coming from Thee, so that I may receive it with humility and reverence. Make me believe that it is ordained by Thy mercy, as an occasion of my practising meritorious patience; and make me still maintain my hope in Thee, though in my sufferings I should be obliged to sacrifice to Thee my life.

After the example of Jesus Christ, I shall draw good from evil, I shall love those who hate me, I shall pray for those who injure me, and I shall bless the **Lord** for everything that tempts me to impatience.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### JESUS CHRIST AT THE SUPPER IN BETHANIA.

I. IN the history of His Passion, Jesus Christ desires that what Magdalene did to honor Him at the supper in

Bethania, six days before His death, should be inserted. That woman, who in the first instance had been a sinner, and afterward had become a penitent, now appears before us as one arrived at a high degree of perfection, when she poured a vase of precious ointment on the head and feet of her Saviour. By His head she acknowledges His Divinity, in His feet His Humanity; and she represents to us by the anointing of His head the love of God, by that of His feet the love of our neighbor. She teaches us that in these two actions consists Christian perfection.

Magdalene was the first to honor the ignominious death of Jesus Christ. She did this by anticipation, being the first to anoint His body with precious ointment, as is done to great personages previous to their burial;—and consider what is most striking in this story. Certain persons present undertook to blame her, as though it were an injudicious act to pour out in this manner so expensive an ointment. But did she, think you, hesitate on their account? No. With fearless generosity she allows them to say what they please, and continues what she is doing. She counts as nothing the sayings and opinions of men. For her it is sufficient to know that what she is doing is acceptable to Jesus. Hence, Jesus has ordained that for this action she should be forever honored throughout the world.

I have great reason to take Magdalene as my guide and advocate. This holy woman is happy to think that she was permitted to anoint Jesus. If I wish, may I not also perform toward Him this kind office? When we make acts of love to God, we anoint the head of Jesus with sweet ointment. We anoint His feet by acts of charity to our neighbor. What prevents my practising these acts?

My God! I know what I should and might do, and I wish to do it;—but I do it not. Frequently, in prayer, I resolve to give myself wholly to Thy love, and moreover to practise works of mercy, spiritual and corporal, toward my neighbor. But when occasions are offered me, how weak am I,—what a wretched coward! Above all, my self-love

is shown in making me a slave to human respect. For this reason how readily do I relinquish my pious exercises; how often do I cease to please Thee, O my God, for fear of displeasing some one in the world! Ah, Jesus! who didst anoint the heart of Magdalene with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, even before she anointed Thy body with sweet ointment, I implore Thee also to anoint my heart and strengthen it by this same alluring sweetness. Holy Magdalene, pray for me, that I may remain firm against all human respect. Live, Jesus! Virtue forever! Let worldlings say what they please, God shall be my support.

Magdalene replied not to those who reproached her,—therefore Jesus undertook to defend her. So Jesus Christ will likewise take care of me, if with patience and humility I bear with evil tongues.

II. Judas is among those who speak against Magdalene. Having charge of the alms for the support of the family of the Apostles, and accustomed to steal a portion for his own purposes, he is enraged at beholding this ointment not given charitably into his hands, as he would have sold it and appropriated a part of the price. Thereupon he begins to consider the selling of Jesus Christ, that thus he might gain some compensation for the theft of which he was now disappointed.

Reflect that that same ointment, which is for Magdalene an odor of sanctity, becomes for Judas a mystery of iniquity. He makes it an occasion of his damnation, as she does of her salvation. But this wretched man does not begin by this act to be perverted,—he was already habituated to theft. It is this vile habit of covetousness that makes him capable of planning without horror the betrayal of his divine Master. Consider, again, that Jesus Christ, who knows perfectly all the wickedness of Judas, does not for that reason expel him from the College of Apostles. He does not drive him from His presence, but patiently supports him. What have we to learn from the conduct of Judas? What from that of Jesus Christ?

How many things there are which I make the occasions



for offending God, and which I should use to honor Him? How do I use my body? How do I use my soul? Oh, what a multitude of abuses, O my God! Everything within me ought to breathe an odor of sweetness to Thy divine Majesty—the sweet odor of good example to my neighbor; but, instead of this, what rank iniquity do I pour forth on all sides! Ah, my Jesus! if I do not deserve the grace to love Thee as Magdalene did, I implore Thee give me the grace not to betray Thee like Judas. Give me the grace to discover my predominant passion and to make it an object of mortification, that it may not become the instrument of my perdition. I rely upon Thy assistance, and I am confident that my hope will not be vain.

In the next place, O my Saviour, when I reflect that, among Thy Apostles, Thou wast pleased to have one that gave Thee constant occasions of exercising patience by the grievous displeasure that he caused Thee, what an example dost Thou give for my imitation when I am obliged to live with persons who cause me annoyance by their faults and imperfections! O Jesus, what a contrast do I behold between myself and Thee! Thou, who art the Most Holy, didst endure Judas, who was a devil incarnate; and I, who on account of my numerous defects require to be compassionated by all and borne with, am not able to compassionate or to bear with any one who is not, in every respect, precisely to my taste. I cherish antipathies and aversions; I follow movements of indiscreet zeal; and at every trifle, I take offence and am perturbed. I expect others to accommodate themselves to my fancy; and, on my side, I have no idea of accommodating myself to any one. What a spirit is mine! How haughty, how restless! Most sweet Jesus! may I learn from Thee to bear with my neighbor,—not by assuming an appearance of good will or by dissembling my impatience through human prudence, but by the practice of true Christian patience for the love of God.

I shall esteem it a more advantageous mortification to act charitably toward those who annoy me than to wear a hair-

shirt or use the discipline. Oh, how meritorious it is to be patient, and thus to preserve fraternal charity!

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ENTRANCE OF JESUS CHRIST INTO JERUSALEM.

I. JESUS CHRIST, knowing that the time of His Passion is approaching, desires to reach the place in which it is appointed that He should suffer—that is, the city of Jerusalem,—in order that it may be apparent that He loves to suffer, and seeks suffering voluntarily. On other occasions He had entered that city; but never with pomp and solemnity, as He does at present, when He wishes to have His entrance accompanied with gladness and festivity. There is a deep mystery in all that He does. Jesus Christ now enters Jerusalem with joy, because on this occasion He enters to suffer and to die on the cross. The nearer the time at which He shall accomplish the Redemption of mankind on the cross approaches, the more brightly do the flames of love burn within His Heart.

Moreover, observe His demeanor on this journey. How majestic He is, and at the same time how humble! He comes not clothed in purple, in a gilded coach, with a long train of attendants, but in a poor garment, riding on an ass; because He does not desire to be feared for His power, but to be loved on account of His meekness. The multitudes ornament the roads, sing hymns of praise, and carry olive branches to denote the coming of a King of Peace. Contemplate the modest bearing of this King, and you will clearly realize that He comes full of gentleness,—not to oppress, but to relieve and save His subjects.

Oh, let us admire His charity and humility! Wherefore, good Jesus, wherefore dost Thou thus hasten to meet the outrages, the scourges, the thorns, the cross that await Thee? I do not marvel at the martyrs embracing their sufferings with delight, because they suffered for love of

Thee; but Thou, for whom art Thou going to suffer? Thou art going to suffer for me; and is it possible, then, that in going to suffer for me Thou showest such eagerness, so much joy? My reason fails me. This surpasses my comprehension. I can only exclaim: O love of Jesus! O immense love! But what must I say, when, on the one side, I behold Thee so eager to suffer for me; and, on the other, see myself so averse to endure anything for Thee?

Again, what shall I say at seeing Thee so humble and myself so proud? As I gaze upon Thee, riding on the ass, methinks I see a doctor in his chair reading me a lesson on humility, and giving me to understand that, although Thou desirest to save all, yet none but the humble shall be saved. Ah, my Jesus, praise and thanks be to Thee forever, because so desirous art Thou of my salvation that Thou not only teachest me humility, but inspirest me with it. Sweet humility! I love thee, I long for thee. Lord, God Almighty! who dost care for each one as Thou dost for all, and carest for all as Thou dost care for each, assist me in my misery, that in the very act of longing to be humble I may not make humility itself the occasion of pride.

To me it shall be a sufficient motive of humility—that I know not, in truth, whether I love God, or whether I am really humble. At times, it seems to me that I have some sentiment of humility and love. But who can say if my self-love does not flatter me in this supposition?

II. When Jesus Christ wrought the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves the crowd proclaimed Him King, and He fled to conceal Himself, thus declining the honor. Now He willingly accepts the acclamations of the people, and of the very children, who lift up their voice to salute Him King of the royal family of David. Not only is He pleased with them, but He also reproves the rulers of the synagogue who, filled with envy, dislike thus to hear Him extolled. He confirms the truth of what they say, when they call Him a King. But the question is, what manner of King is He?

He is a King that fears to be made a king, since it

appertains not to man to make Him King, as He is already King, Son of a royal Father, whose kingdom is not human but divine; not earthly but heavenly; not temporal but eternal. Hence, He takes pleasure in these innocent acclamations, which are prompted by the light of faith, acknowledging Him to be the true Messiah, come to save the world. As the angels kept holiday and sung glory to Him at His birth, so now, that He is about to die, all these people rejoice, declaring Him their Saviour;—and they pray to Him, in the words of David, that He would deign to grant them salvation.

Reflect, that as this solemn appearance of Jesus Christ in the character of King has been foretold by the Prophet, who invited Jerusalem to go to meet and receive Him, so we should understand this same invitation as also addressed to us. Jesus Christ comes thus to you also, O my soul, with royal majesty, in order to work out your salvation. And why, oh why! have you not likewise the simplicity and humility of those people and of those children to praise Him as He deserves and to entreat Him to save you? Go forward, my soul, to meet Him with sentiments of joy, humility and fervor.

Ah, my Jesus! was it worth while to make Thee King of men, since Thou art already the immortal King of ages? That Thou shouldst be my King is no honor to Thee,—it is a proof of Thy condescension. Thou art come into the world with infinite mercy as my King, to make me a king, and to bestow upon me the kingdom of Thy glory. Be it so, O Lord! Help to save me, since without Thee I am bereft of wisdom, and must needs fall headlong down the precipice. Into Thy hands I commit the work of my salvation. Direct and assist me, since there is none but Thyself who can give me light and strength and opportunities for working out my final perseverance. As for me, I have determined that if I save my soul, I shall have done all that can be done in this world; and if I lose it, whatever else I may have done here amounts to nothing. My Jesus! my Saviour! I beseech Thee not to deprive me of Thy

powerful assistance in the work of my salvation, which is my only work.

I shall excite in myself an ardent desire for my eternal salvation, in order to correspond with the desire that Jesus Christ has for it. What has Jesus Christ done to save me, and what am I doing? What should I do to work out my salvation?

III. In return for the benefit of their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt, the Jews had a custom of sacrificing every year a lamb, at the Passover, with solemn rites. This lamb was ordered to be without spot, and to be brought with signs of gladness to their houses five days before it was sacrificed. Jesus Christ also was pleased to observe exactly this holy rite; and, being the true, unspotted Lamb that was to be immolated at this Passover for the Redemption of the world, He enters Jerusalem with similar demonstrations of joy precisely five days previous to His crucifixion and immolation on Calvary.

He is the High Priest who is destined to offer the sacrifice to His heavenly Father; but He is, at the same time, the Victim to be offered for the sins of men. Therefore, He enters Jerusalem with solemn pomp, to prepare for the great occasion and to make known to all what He is,—the true Lamb of God, prefigured of old in the ancient Law, and pointed out by His precursor, St. John the Baptist.

Oh, if any one could have witnessed what was taking place in the Heart of Jesus as He considered Himself, first, in the light of Priest, then of Lamb!—As Priest, what acceptable acts of religious homage did He not offer to the divine Majesty! As Lamb, what burning acts of charity, being aware, as He was, that He would soon be slain so painfully in expiation, not of His own sins, but for those of others! With regard to ourselves, we must reflect and inquire: If the Jews were accustomed to offer a lamb in memory of their deliverance from the afflictions of Egypt, what ought I to offer for my deliverance from the eternal torments of hell?



In the first place, O Eternal Father! in Thy presence I make a full confession of my sins. The shame for my base ingratitude I purpose to offer to Thy praise and honor, in acknowledgment of Thy being deserving of everlasting glory, and of my having committed a most heinous deed by offending Thee. In the second place, I unite my affections with those of Jesus Christ, and with Him I offer Thee all that I am. How many base passions are there in me,—of pride, anger, envy, gluttony, and concupiscence for the miserable pleasures of the flesh and of the world! All these, O my God! I now desire to sacrifice to Thee, in union with Thy immaculate Lamb. Give me an upright mind to accomplish this sacrifice, and grant that this my offering may be accepted by Thee, together with that sacrifice of justice which Jesus Christ is now about to make for me. My Jesus! who art going with such alacrity to die for me, give me the grace to imitate Thee, so that I may practise mortification with that gladness of heart which gives to the sacrifice an odor of acceptable sweetness.

I shall select that passion that predominates in me, and I will offer it up with the greatest fervor possible, in token of thanksgiving for the benefit of Redemption,—that inexpressible gift of the divine Goodness.

IV. If we behold Jesus Christ as He enters Jerusalem, accompanied by His Apostles and by the multitude who pay Him reverence and honor, crying out with a loud voice, “Long live the Son of David, long live the blessed Messiah!” there is much to give us consolation, as we see the divine Person acknowledged and glorified in our human nature. But if, on the other hand, we consider that in less than five days, in presence of and among His Apostles, one of them will betray Him, another will deny Him, and all of them will forsake Him; and before this same people who now raise their voice and salute Him as King He will be accused of sedition, will be regarded as worse than an assassin, and the same multitude will again cry out, insisting that He should die upon a cross—what can we say of so strange a reversal?

This is only a representation of what is transpiring in the world. From honor to disgrace, from *Hosanna* to *Crucifige*, the distance is short. Rapid is the flight of pleasure. Soon does all that is called glory, prosperity, mirth, come to an end; soon does all that is sweet turn to bitterness. Judge then, my soul, if it be profitable to make so great account of the world; and take as a rule of conduct this infallible truth—that all is vanity, and that it is vanity of vanities to attach ourselves to vanity. All things pass away, and there is no lasting happiness but in that eternal joy promised to the man who serves God.

But this scene likewise brings before me a picture of my own manner of acting. When I approach the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, what protestations do I make of praise, love, and honor to Jesus Christ! I prefer Him to all things; I declare that I love Him absolutely—but how frequently do I, in a short time, make less account of Him than of a wretched gratification, and by sin I revolt against Him! Today I cry *Hosanna*; tomorrow I shall cry out, *Crucify Him*. My instability is a vile effect, not so much of my corrupt nature, as of my habitual indulgence in wickedness.

O my God! Thou seest me, and Thou knowest me through and through; Thou knowest every atom of my being. Often I separate myself from Thee, because I am never truly and intimately united to Thee. I can not be united to Thee except by loving Thee. Consequently, I am not united to Thee, because I love Thee not. But how does it happen, Thou true Eternity and eternal Truth, that I do not love Thee? Ah, my God, while I confess my misery, do Thou cause me to weep over it. I love vanity, and to vanity I am closely bound. That is the source of all my evil. But do Thou, I implore Thee, destroy this love that I entertain for vanity and infuse into me love for Thee. Strengthen me in this love, and by Thy holy fear confirm the resolution that I now make of loving and obeying Thee forever.

Another reason why I am not faithful to my good resolu-

tions is that I trust in myself. Henceforward I shall trust in God, and God shall be my strength.

V. As Jesus Christ continued His journey in the midst of honor and applause, and was drawing near to the city of Jerusalem, He had no sooner cast His eyes upon it than He burst into a flood of tears. He wept, by His example to accentuate what He had preached, that they who weep are blessed. He weeps,—not that He is to be condemned to death in that city, but because He foresees the ruin that awaits it when, by the just judgment of God, it shall be destroyed by its enemies. He weeps not over the city on account of the destruction of its buildings, but over the inhabitants for the misery—the eternal misery—soon to befall their souls. Although He is about to die for the salvation of all men, yet they, through their own fault, will not be saved, but will forever be numbered among the reprobate.

Reflect how great is the love that Jesus Christ has for souls. He is going to shed His blood for all,—for those who will be saved, and for those who will be lost. But for those who will be lost He sheds, besides His blood, also a flood of tears. Now, if Jerusalem is a figure of the Church, composed of elect and reprobate, can it be that I, perchance, am of the number of those whose wickedness draws tears from the eyes of our loving Redeemer? He weeps over those who fall from their first fervor and abandon themselves to a life of sinfulness and sloth. Am I, perhaps, one of these?

O most sweet Jesus! I contemplate Thy tears as shed especially for me, a child of Thy Church; but one that is unfaithful to Thy graces, ungrateful for Thy benefits, in danger of everlasting perdition unless I endeavor to improve my state. Ah! never allow me to be lost. I have deserved, and I now deserve, on account of my sins, to be in hell. I know it. Dost Thou weep? Weep, therefore, for me also, Thou beloved Son of David; but let Thy tears for me be not the tears of affliction which Thou dost shed for the reprobate, but tears of consolation that may merit

for me the spirit of penance that I have need of for my salvation. As I am aware, Thou dost rejoice exceedingly for one soul alone that returns to Thee truly penitent. Grant, then, I implore Thee, that I also may possess that penance to which by Thy loving mercy Thou dost call and excite me. Through the merits of Thy tears, as well as by Thy blood, I hope to be saved. But, as the shedding of those tears and of Thy blood is the outcome of that most inflamed love which Thou hast for me, I pray Thee, my merciful Saviour, to save one that hopes in Thee, and to make my hope strong by enkindling in me the love that I should have for Thee. If, wanting in love for Thee, I regard all other virtues with suspicion, it is that love alone which can preserve me, in life and in death, safe from the snares of my infernal enemy.

I shall beseech the most blessed Virgin to offer for me to the divine Majesty the tears shed by Jesus Christ, and to obtain for me tears of contrition.

VI. Jesus Christ makes known the affliction of His Heart by weeping over Jerusalem. Casting a look of tender compassion on this unhappy city, He declares that it is for this reason that His tears flow,—that she is thoughtless, and does not perceive the dangers that menace her. He only says, “If thou didst know,” as though He should say, “if thou knewest, if thou didst but apprehend the wrath of God which threatens thee, surely thou wouldst weep and wouldst seek some safeguard. This is thy misfortune. Thy ruin is near, and thou dost not regard it.”<sup>1</sup>

A loving father is grieved, and weeps, on beholding his child about to expire because he refuses the remedy given for his cure. In like manner does Jesus Christ mourn at the sight of that city which has within its reach the balsam of salvation, and prefers rather to perish than to apply it. He comes as a Saviour to visit Jerusalem and to enlighten its people; but these people, enamoured of vanity, shut their eyes to the truth, and become unworthy of salvation because they neglect the means to secure it.

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke xxi.

Therefore does Jesus Christ conclude His lamentations over it in this manner: Jerusalem, thou wilt perish; and the cause of thy destruction will be that thou didst neither foresee thine evils, nor didst thou know thine own good.

This prediction is a most important warning for me. With how many inspirations, with how many lights, how many invitations both from within and from without does Jesus come to seek me, that I may consider my ways, repent of my disorderly life, and devote myself with fervor to the acquisition of virtue! On my correspondence with these visits, or my abuse of them, depends my eternal salvation or my eternal perdition. How do I act with regard to them?

O miserable that I am! how distracted, how careless, how indolent am I! This present life enchants me; and as for eternity, which is so near, I give it no thought. Willingly would I become a saint, but I reject the means of sanctity; and experiencing within me a combat between the sorrowful pleasures of the flesh and the joyful sorrows of the spirit, I stand irresolute and can not decide whether I am indeed spiritual or carnal. My Jesus, my God, have pity on me! Thou knowest the cause of the evil,—that I am blind to Thy lights, deaf to Thy voice, cold and insensible to the tender affections that Thou inspirest. From the depth of my misery I turn to Thee, my merciful and good Physician.

My mortal wound is in my heart, which is filled with the spirit and the love of the world. If I have heretofore imagined that I entertained some love for Thee, I now behold my mistake. I see that I do not truly love Thee. My love is feigned, insincere, consisting of words,—and nothing more. What shall become of me if I end my days in this state? Make me, O Lord, profit by Thy mercies while there is yet time.

I shall set an immense value on the inspirations with which God visits me from time to time. I will fear that which Jerusalem did not fear—the wrath of God; and I will exert myself to commence a new life with great fervor.



## CHAPTER V.

## JESUS CHRIST TAKES LEAVE OF HIS MOTHER.

I. IN the history of the Passion we must insert a pious and devout reflection, which is based on strong probability, though we do not meet with it in the Gospel. Jesus Christ had always treated His blessed Mother with reverence and obedience, never failing in any of those marks of attention that are due from a devoted child. Consequently, it is not likely that, as the time for Him to die approached, He would leave her to go and perform the greatest of His works, without informing her and bidding her farewell. Moreover, He had already imparted to her the knowledge of other hidden and exalted mysteries on this subject.

Therefore, we must represent to ourselves Jesus, the most loving of all the sons of men, returning to Bethania, as He could find no lodgings in Jerusalem, and after supper withdrawing into a separate room with Mary, the most affectionate of mothers. Jesus is sorely distressed at the pain which He is about to give His Mother by what He intends to tell her, and Mary is grieved before she hears it, having a presentiment of what is to happen to her Son; the conspiracy of the chief priests against Him having been made known to her and noised abroad.

This Son is God, but He is also man; and having been pleased to take upon Himself man's infirmities, there can be no doubt that on this occasion He feels within Him the sorrow that any other man would experience, and this in a degree far more severe in proportion to the still greater tenderness of His Heart. His soul will be filled with sadness in the garden, at the thought of being separated from His body; and can we imagine that now He suffers nothing at being obliged to part with His most tenderly beloved Mother?

When shall I be touched with compassion, if not at present? Behold, my soul, this Son; behold this Mother. The Son sighs at having to do that which He has never done before,—that is, to cause affliction to His most dear

Mother; and the Mother comprehends the meaning of those sighs which her most beloved Son breathes forth. On this occasion the Jews have no share in the Passion of Jesus and Mary. What Jesus suffers is caused by Mary in her relation to Him as His Mother. What Mary suffers is caused by Jesus in His relation to her as Son.

O Jesus, most amiable Son! O Mary, most amiable Mother! poor and miserable though I be, I cast myself at your feet. Give me, O Mary! a little of that love which thou dost bear to Jesus. Give me, O Jesus! a little of the love which Thou bearest to Mary. Your reciprocal love makes you suffer now; and it is this love that I desire to possess, in order that I may be enabled to suffer with you. Mother of Jesus, who dost not disdain to be my Mother too, and who lovest me with a love far exceeding that of other mothers for their children, have pity on me. Thou art full of compassion for the miserable, and it is because I am the most miserable of all miserable beings that I hope to obtain from thee the grace of holy love, which I earnestly implore.

I will sympathize with Jesus and Mary in their excessive anguish; and, reflecting that I am the cause of their affliction, I shall excite in myself sorrow for my sins, since on account of them my Saviour is about to suffer and die.

II. As Jesus Christ possessed a heart in which tenderness was united to manly fortitude, we may imagine Him speaking thus to Mary in the affectionate language of a child, and at the same time with the dignity of a Man-God: "The time has arrived, my Mother, when the world is to be redeemed by the sacrifice of My life. I shall be delivered into the hands of My enemies, who will let loose their bitterest rage against Me. I thank thee for the pains and toils which thou hast undergone for Me; and as thou didst give thy consent for my Incarnation, so now I desire that thou shouldst give it for My death. Be content that I leave thee, and go to do the will of My heavenly Father." Thus spoke Jesus. What did Mary say? Overcome with grief, she can utter only a few words, and these interrupted by sighs and tears: "Dear Jesus, my Father, my Child,

my All! Grant that I may go and die instead of Thee; or, at least, let me die with Thee! Can the Father, who is almighty, not find other means to redeem the world except by Thy death?" This mystic turtle-dove would gladly say more, but weeping prevents her. Comprehending that it is impossible for the eternal decrees to be changed, she resigns herself with absolute conformity to the divine will, with heroic fortitude, obtaining a victory over herself. Her grief, however, is most acute. And, my soul, would it be possible for thee to see her and not weep? Oh, who can fathom the sorrow of that Son and of that Mother? It is impossible,—for the excess of their love is beyond comprehension.

I must consider the motive that induced Mary to give her consent that Jesus Christ should die. It is because He dies for me; as, in truth, He suffered death for me in particular, no less than in general. She might speak thus to her Son: "Who is he that deserves that Thou shouldst give Thy precious life for him? Thou art the Son of God; he is a vile worm." But she says nothing of the sort,—and filled with love for me, she consents that her Son should go forth to meet a most painful death for me.

Mother of Fair Love, Mother of Sorrows, how immense are my obligations to thee? Thanks for the exceeding charity thou hast had for me. I pray the angels in Paradise to give to thee millions of thanks in my name. And thou, my heart, what manner of heart art thou if thou dost not burn with love for Mary, who is all love for thee, who for thy sake is willing to give up even her own Son? Wilt thou in future find it difficult to forsake some sensual pleasure, and to mortify thyself for love of her who, for love of thee, so lovingly underwent the excruciating mortification of consenting to the death of Jesus Christ?

In my meditations on the Passion of Jesus Christ I will frequently call to mind the sorrows of Mary, in order that I may sympathize with her. Were I to shed a hundred thousand tears for her sake they would not be worth one of those tears that she shed for me.

III. Mary had endured in advance a long, tedious martyrdom, without one hour of peace and calm in her troubled heart, on account of the knowledge that had been imparted to her from on high relative to the Passion of Jesus Christ. But all this is of little or no moment compared with the agonizing grief that she experiences at bidding her Son a last farewell. When she lost her Child at the age of twelve years she was profoundly afflicted, it is true, at not knowing where He was. Still she was consoled with the hope of finding Him again, as she did afterward. Now she knows whither He is going—that is, to be bound with chains, scourged, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross. Now, she has not a ray of hope left to support her; now it is that she feels more sensibly than ever her soul pierced by that sword of which holy Simeon had forewarned her.

On account of His Passion, which she foresaw, Jesus had been a torture to her; but, at the same time, He had been her delight by His most sweet conversation; since, wherever He went, she accompanied Him. What, then, will be her anguish when she is forced to renounce Him altogether? O thou true Lily among thorns, Lily of purity and charity! She is a mother and a widow,—one whose affections both by nature and grace are most tender; and now she beholds her innocent, her only Son, about to die in the flower of His age,—that Son in whom, as He is likewise her true God, all her treasure is and all her love. Who will give tears to my eyes that I may condole with this object of compassion? O Mary! let that abiding grief which thou hast in thy heart be implanted in my own.

But once more let us turn our thoughts to Jesus. He abandons His beloved Mother with the most poignant anguish, for love of me, that He may go in search of me, His lost sheep. Oh, what love He has for me! What return do I make for it? I fly from Him when He seeks me, and when He has found me I leave Him again. I leave Him to follow my depraved appetites; and for love of Him I can not give up a trifling worldly phantasy of my own, one little

opinion that I have advanced, one single worthless gratification. Oh, ingratitude! Oh, perverseness!

O loving Shepherd and Saviour! I humble myself in Thy presence. I repent of my wicked folly. I am grieved that I have been so ungrateful as to abandon Thee, and that I have loved creatures more than Thee. I acknowledge that I have done an evil thing to turn from Thee, the sovereign Good; and in Thy great mercy I entreat Thee to forgive me. O sweet Jesus! I cry to Thee for pity and mercy through that grief which Thou didst experience in leaving Thy Mother, and by that which Thy Mother felt in separating from Thee. When I followed my senses and wandered far from Thee, I lost myself most miserably. I beseech Thee, O Lord, to seek and find me once more, and I promise never again to stray from Thee nor to leave Thee.

With gratitude I shall recall the sorrows that Jesus and Mary suffered for me; and I will testify my thankfulness by willingly enduring any adversity that may come to me from divine Providence, and likewise, by making use of some voluntary penance.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### JESUS CHRIST AT HIS LAST PASCHAL SUPPER.

I. JESUS CHRIST having been at all times, even to the end of His life, obedient to the Law in its minutest detail, takes care not to fail in anything that is ordered with respect to the Paschal solemnity; but He has before His mind only the idea of another Passover, more conducive to the glory of God and more advantageous to us. The Passover among the Jews was a commemoration of their having passed from a state of bondage under Pharaoh to liberty. We view it as a mystical figure of our passing from a state of sin to grace, from perdition to glory. This—our eternal salvation,—this is the Passover so ardently desired by Our Saviour. Though to Him this Passover and His own death



are one and the same, yet it is a time that He loves; as He has frequently spoken of it, and always with expressions of most vehement longing for its approach.

I will reflect, that Jesus Christ being pleased to celebrate the Passover with His disciples, they quickly prepare for it in the manner they have been directed; and what is the Passover that I also should desire and sigh for with the most intense earnestness? As the name, O my soul! signifies a passage, this is the Passover that God orders thee to observe: namely, a passage from that inordinate love which thou entertainest for earthly, perishable things, to the love of things heavenly and eternal. Oh, happy Passover for us, if we are diligent in making this passage. Arise promptly,—why dost thou delay to pass from tepidity to fervor, from vanity to truth, from the life of the world to a perfect Christian life?

Behold me, Lord, attentive to Thy inspiration. I return thanks for the dolorous Passover which Thou art about to keep for me, and I desire to imitate Thee and to keep a true Passover, such as I have need of, by a complete change of life. Blessed be Thy mercy, which has deigned to open my ears to hear Thy voice and my eyes to receive Thy light. I am ashamed and I repent of those vain and miserable pleasures in which I have so sadly wasted my time. For love of Thy love I accuse myself of them in the bitterness of my soul, in order that henceforth Thou alone mayest be my sweetness and my love. No longer shall I remain as I have been. I renounce thee, O world, with all thy pride and vain-glory. I renounce thee, O flesh, with thy wicked concupiscences. I renounce thee, Satan, with thy flattery and deceit. My God, my soul, my eternal salvation,—these shall be the constant objects of my thoughts and affections.

But of what am I thinking that I should speak with so great confidence, as though I were able to answer for the steadfastness of my resolutions? Ah, my Jesus! if I observe this Passover of which I speak by escaping from the slavery of my tyrannical passions and entering into the liberty of Thy elect children, the glory will redound to

Thee alone: since it will be solely the effect of that grace which Thou hast purchased for me, and which I now beg of Thee with humility and confidence, relying only on Thy superabundant merits. I shall reflect on the urgent necessity that I have to reform my tepid, careless manner of life; and I will excite myself to an ardent desire of this reformation as a preparation for meditating with fruit on the Passion of Jesus Christ, a mystical figure of which is presented to us in His Last Supper.

II. The Apostles, aware of the longing with which Jesus Christ looked forward to the approaching Passover, inquire, on the morning of Holy Thursday, where they should make ready the Supper at which the Lamb was to be sacrificed. In obedience to the Law, which orders that the Passover should be celebrated nowhere but in the holy city, He makes choice of Peter and John—the loving and the beloved among His disciples,—and directs them to go to a certain street to find a certain man, to whom they shall say in His name: *The Master saith: My time is near at hand; with thee I make the Pasch with my disciples.*<sup>1</sup> They obey; they go and find the man; and everything is soon arranged.

In the first place let us reflect how Jesus Christ, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, has become so poor for us as to have neither house nor lodging in Jerusalem, and to be obliged to keep the Passover in the house of another. He had said as much sometime previously: that “the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.”<sup>2</sup> What confusion should this not cost me,—I who am so attached to my little comforts; so fastidious, and quick to complain if I stand in want of anything. O poverty of spirit, O love of poverty, so requisite for all who aspire to heavenly treasures, where are you to be found in my interior? Secondly, let us reflect also on the honor conferred upon the unknown master of that house by the choice which Jesus Christ made of it for the celebration of this august ceremony, and on his

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 18. (<sup>2</sup>) St. Luke ix, 58.

heroic obedience. Knowing, as he must have done from the public decree made by the rulers of the synagogue against Jesus Christ, that he will inevitably encounter persecutions and losses as soon as it is noised abroad that he has given Him entertainment, he, nevertheless, receives Him with the most obliging courtesy, without regard to his own danger or to any other human motive.

Jesus Christ, in His great goodness, makes to me also the same sweet announcement,—that He desires to come into my house, into my soul, there to celebrate His Passover; that is, to effect my eternal salvation. What a favor, that the Son of the most high God should condescend to remember me and to honor me with a visit! Ah, my Lord! since it seems good to Thee, enter this my house; its three apartments—my memory, my understanding, and my will,—are all at Thy disposal. My only regret is that it is not worthy of Thee; but I entreat Thee to make it worthy, by adorning it with Thy choicest virtues. O yes, my Jesus, come, for I expect Thee. My heart is entirely Thine. I know that in consequence of this I shall suffer persecutions both from the devil, from the world, and from my own rebellious human nature; but I rely upon Thy assistance, and fear nothing.

I shall watch over myself in order to break the attachments that bind me to earthly things; and that I may be a follower of Jesus Christ, I shall fortify myself against human respect, imploring at all times the divine protection.

III. Every year Jesus Christ had faithfully celebrated the Passover, and always with sentiments most worthy of His religious heart, looking upon the lamb about to be sacrificed as a figure of His own sacrifice which was to be made upon the cross. But at this last Passover, when these figures are about to end, and the Scriptures concerning Him to be fully accomplished, He contemplates the reality that these figures represent and which, in fact, will this very night begin to be fulfilled. According to the Law, the Paschal lamb is offered by Him on the evening of Holy Thursday. On that same night He is overwhelmed with

fear, so that this night is virtually the commencement of His Passion and Crucifixion. Let us, with devout attention, place ourselves in spirit at this Supper, and our gracious Lord will not permit our souls to go away fasting. What must Jesus Christ say, as He sits at this table and beholds the mystic lamb slain and roasted on the dish; and as He cuts it in pieces to distribute it among His disciples, He reflects on Himself as the true Lamb without spot, who is soon to be crucified and slain? This was a solemnity without parallel,—in which met shadow and light; the figure and the truth; that is, the figure, and that which was prefigured.

At the sight of that lamb, the memorial of the first Passover which took place in Egypt, Jesus Christ reflects that His Passover has come,—when He is to pass from this world to His Father. Knowing that the figures of the Old Law are fulfilled in His own person, and that the time has now arrived when animals are no longer to be immolated in honor of the Deity, He humbles Himself in His human nature and offers Himself to the Most High, praying to Him that as heretofore He looked with pleasure on the offerings of lambs for the sake of what they represented, so now He will still more graciously accept the sacrifice of Himself which He is about to make for the salvation of souls. Oh! how many profound mysteries are there, especially of love, in this one mystery; since in this the Old Law is terminated, and the New Law of grace takes its place.

What thanks can I render to Thee, Eternal Father, for having been born in a land in which reigns, in which is known, Thy Catholic faith, and in which Thou art honored by the oblation of the true Lamb—Thy most holy Son? I offer Him to Thee for my sins with the same sentiments as those with which He offered Himself at that Supper for the sins of the whole world. And what can I offer to Thy infinite Majesty more precious or more worthy of acceptance by Thee as an odor of sweetness? There is nothing more pleasing, more acceptable, to Thee than that sacred Humanity. Why, then, should it not induce Thee to have

pity on my frailties? This is that sacrifice of justice which Thou art pleased should be offered to Thee in Thy Church, and through which Thou wilt have us firmly trust in Thee. Therefore, in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ, I hope for the forgiveness of my sins; I hope for grace, I hope for glory; and, what is more, I hope that this my hope will never be disappointed nor confounded.

Frequently I shall offer Jesus Christ to the Eternal Father, with a lively conviction that He is my abundant propitiation; and I shall say, in the words of St. John the Baptist: *Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world.*<sup>1</sup>

IV. When we apprehend the approach of some great trouble, we are disturbed and vexed. This is not the case with Jesus Christ. He knows that His Passion is at hand; that its approach is to be reckoned no longer by days, but by hours. However, His soul is calm, and by this He manifests that He is the true Son of God and the Saviour of the world. He does not try to avoid death, but waits for it with intrepidity. And as a father, on the eve of his departure for a distant land, speaks to his children with more affection and tenderness than customarily, so Christ, at this Last Supper, speaks to His Apostles with more extraordinary sweetness.

He gives them a detailed account of what will occur that very night in order that they may not afterward be taken by surprise, as by something that happens unawares; and that they may know, when they see Him going to suffering and to death, that He goes because it is His own free choice to do so. He explains to them the mystery of Redemption, which by His doctrine and miracles He had commenced and was to complete by His Passion and death. Then He exclaims with effusion of heart, and in a tone of joy: *with desire I have desired*; that is, I have been burning with the wish *to eat this Pasch with you*.<sup>2</sup> that is, the Passover of this year, the last that I shall eat with you; and this is the reason why it is so dear to Me: because it is at this Supper

(1) St. John i, 29. (2) St. Luke xxii, 15.



that I shall purchase eternal life for all the children of Adam.

Let us reflect whence comes this ardent desire of Jesus Christ to celebrate this Passover. This desire proceeds from love. Because He was always filled with exceeding love for our souls, explains why He had so vehement a longing for this Passover which fell on the eve of His death, as now His eager desire will be satiated to found the new kingdom of His Church, and thus provide us with all the means necessary for our eternal salvation.

O most loving Saviour, if in any way I did but correspond with that most vehement desire that possesses Thee for my sanctification and salvation, with a sincere and constant desire of being sanctified and saved, how different would be my conduct from what it really is! I would indeed wish to be good and to do good, and to strive after perfection and save my soul. Yes, I would wish it; but my desires are like a variable wind, that comes and goes. This is a consequence of my inconstant will. A person who truly desires something will make use of the requisite means to attain his end. I, however, pass my days, one after another, in a state of wretched indolence, doing little or nothing of what I should do. O good Jesus! kindle Thy love within my breast, and then there will be likewise kindled in me the desire to please Thee in every way. I actually desire to please Thee, but my will is too weak and inconstant. To Thee it appertains to render it strong in resolving, and faithful in accomplishing, what is right. From Thee I expect the strength to fulfil this, so that I may at last become truly holy in this life, and forever blessed in the life to come.

As Jesus Christ for love of me ardently desired His Passion, so I, for love of Him, on my side will animate myself to the desire of meditating upon and imitating it; since in this sanctity consists, and on this eternal life depends.

## CHAPTER VII.

## JESUS CHRIST WASHES THE FEET OF HIS APOSTLES.

I. WHEN the Supper was over at which the lamb had been eaten, but before the table was cleared, Jesus Christ rises, lays aside His mantle, girds Himself with a towel, and, having put water into a basin, begins to wash the feet of His disciples. He does all this by Himself, not choosing to be assisted by any one in performing this office. The Evangelist, before relating this fact, sets forth the profound wisdom of Our Saviour, the Divinity of His person, His eternal generation, and the infinite power that He has over all things in the world. All this is full of mystery, for this washing of the feet is, as it were, a prelude to His Passion; and as throughout the Passion we must bear in mind who it is that suffers, so now we should consider who this Person is that washes the disciples' feet, since it is impossible to comprehend how profound is His humility if we do not raise our thoughts to contemplate the exceeding greatness of His dignity.

St. John, before declaring to us the Incarnation of the Word, speaks of His Divinity that we may have an idea of the humility of the Son of God when we behold Him stoop so low from such a height. Therefore, when he comes to the description of His Passion, he again calls our attention to His Divinity, so that a brighter lustre may be given to His humility; and before coming to the humiliation of His cross, he tells us of the humility He displayed at the Last Supper, when the Lord of the universe humbled Himself to wash the feet of His Apostles.

O my soul, dost thou understand! The Son of God came down from heaven to earth to save a lost world; and as the world was lost through pride, in order to save it He opposes His humility to this pride. Behold now the King of kings, the Almighty on His knees, before these poor fishermen, washing their feet with His sacred hands, doing them the service of the meanest slave. Cry out,—O profound, O

astounding humility! Then ask thyself: if this is true, can humility be a thing to be ashamed of?

O my God, Thy humility amazes me! With this example present to my eyes, I am exceedingly abashed at my own repugnance to humiliation. This repugnance is a manifest evidence of my pride: for whence comes it that I am ashamed to yield a trifling point of honor, to renounce some chimerical opinion of my own, to support with meekness a slander, or an injurious word, or any wrong inflicted upon me? The sole cause of all this is that I am too proud; and my pride must be great in proportion to the greatness of the confusion and the difficulty I experience in humbling myself. What, then, O my Lord! must I do to obtain humility, which is indispensable for my eternal salvation? I humble myself now in Thy presence, to implore it of Thee as a gift of Thy grace. Through the merits of Thy most profound humiliation of Thyself at the Supper, take from me, I beseech Thee, the spirit of that accursed pride and give me the treasure of Thy holy humility. I shall endeavor to have a right conception of this truth:—that I am full of pride, have no humility, and do not even know what humility means. Consequently, in all my prayers I shall never cease laboring to obtain it from God.

II. The Evangelist not only relates the washing of the feet; he, moreover, gives the reason for it. It is this: he says that Jesus Christ knows that He is the true Son of God, and knows that the Eternal Father has placed the entire universe in His hands. At first sight, we do not remark the connection between this lofty motive and the low, insignificant action that follows. Nevertheless, there is to be found in it a mysterious and important lesson for us.

The first of the Beatitudes pronounced by Our Saviour is poverty of spirit: by which is understood, in the first place, humility, to which especial glory is promised. In the second place, detachment from the things of the world, which has for its appropriate reward the possession of heavenly riches. Therefore, when the Son of God abases

Himself so far as to wash the feet of His Apostles, He intends to teach us that we must trample pride under foot and that humility is a virtue worthy of God. Again, as He washes their feet with those very hands into which the Father has given dominion over all things in the world, He teaches us in like manner that we must not keep the world in our heart, but under our feet. Or, as the Apostle explains it, we must live with our heart fixed not on earth, but in thought and affection raised to an eternal life in heaven, where our conversation should be.

Reflect, my soul, on this point, which is of vital importance. When God created man He made him lord of the world, and placed all created things under his feet. By this He intended to teach him that, being destined for eternal happiness, he should look upon all the things of time as beneath him, bestowing upon them neither his esteem nor his love. But by the sin of Adam the desires of man became irregular and turned away from their right course;—and what does Jesus Christ do, when He comes to reform and to save him? He who has the entire world in His hands, by washing the Apostles' feet, intends to say: Behold what he must do who wishes to be saved. He must value the world at what it really is, trampling under his feet all earthly things.

But how, O my God, do I observe this Thy lesson? I am precisely one of those whose head and heart are filled with the world, and what will Thy plentiful Redemption profit me if I still erroneously prefer temporal things to those that are eternal? This attachment to the earth puts me on a level with the brute creation. Where is my good sense, where is my reason, when I forget heaven and set my heart on a shadow,—on smoke, on nothingness? Correct, O Lord! my conduct, I beseech Thee, and acknowledging that it is to Thee, my Creator, my Redeemer, my last End, that I am indebted for my whole being, take away from me all human, earthly love, and make me use these fleeting goods only as means for acquiring those that are eternal.

I shall examine what are the things of the world to

which I am attached ; and, obedient to the lesson taught by Jesus Christ, I will resolve that no longer shall my heart be under the dominion of vanity, which it ought to despise, and tread under foot.

III. Jesus Christ, going from one to another, in his turn kneels before Peter. This Apostle seeing prostrate at his feet Him whom, a short time before, he had confessed to be the Son of the living God, is lost in astonishment at such humility. He recollects what he believes of Him and what he knows of his own lowliness ; and, as it were, beside himself and stupefied, he exclaims : “ Thou, O Lord, wash my feet ? Thou do this to me ? Thou, the God of Majesty and Glory, wash the feet of a vile creature ? The Lord of lords, God Almighty, perform this action for a miserable sinner, —a miserable sinner like myself ? ”

We can not imagine how agreeable to the Son of the Most High, who looks with favor on the humble and rejects the proud, was the humility of the fervent Apostle. But as humility is not to be commended when it refuses to obey, our most gracious Lord exhorts him to obedience and persuades him thereto, saying, that although at present he may not understand the mystery of this action, he will soon know : meaning that he will no longer wonder at the only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father washing the feet of fishermen with water, when he shall see, as he will in the near future, the same Son of God wash the unclean souls of sinners with His own blood. Peter, however, as he knew not as yet the mystery of the Passion, confounded at beholding the Deity thus humbled, persists firmly and obstinately in his refusal, protesting that on no account will he ever consent that He, his Sovereign Lord and Maker, should wash the feet of so poor and insignificant a creature as he is.

I must reflect on the important lesson which the humility of St. Peter affords me. When I meditate on the humility that Jesus Christ teaches me by precept and example, I see clearly enough that it is my duty to be humble ; but how can I be humble in practice when I am so ignorant of the



theory of this virtue, that I do not actually know in what it properly consists? Blessed, then, be the Apostle who, in two words, explains to me both the theory and practice of true humility. The whole secret is, to realize in myself and to be profoundly penetrated with two things: *What art Thou, O my God, and what am I?*

But who is there that is able to enlighten my darkness, to know what Thou art, and what I am, but Thou alone, O my God? This is a grace which I must expect from Thee through Thy goodness and mercy; since this knowledge is a good exceeding great, on which depends my eternal salvation, and every good gift proceeds from Thee; since of myself I possess nothing but what is evil. Most humble and most glorious Jesus, inspire me with thoughts worthy of Thee; then I shall be able to comprehend what I must think of myself.

Humility is manifested by trial,—and the surest test of humility is obedience and docility. Therefore, I shall obey my superiors; and, moreover, I shall be docile to my equals and inferiors.

IV. Peter remains steadfast in his resolution not to allow his feet to be washed, for it appears to him that this is the effect of well-regulated zeal and that it is better for him to resist than to yield. Hence, Jesus Christ is no longer satisfied with his humility, which is wanting in condescension, and beholding him obstinately determined to be guided by indiscreet fervor rather than by holy obedience, He is angry with him, and thus He threatens him severely: *If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me.*<sup>1</sup> This is as much as saying that He will banish him from His company, cut him off from the Sacraments, and from all share in His kingdom. A fearful menace!

Peter on hearing it understands the matter perfectly, for he loves and desires nothing so much as to be always with Jesus. A conflict arises within him between love and fear; but rather than be separated from his Master he surrenders immediately, and offers not only his feet to be washed but

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xiii, 8.

also his hands and his head. At first, he was full of fervor in refusing to be washed: now he is still more full of fervor in obeying and submitting to everything for the great and generous love that he entertains for his divine Master.

Let us reflect on this. Peter was so positive in his idea that it was an unworthy and unbecoming thing that he should allow the Son of God to wash his feet that no one could convince him to the contrary, still less force him to yield. And, indeed, to judge the matter by human reason, which sees not beyond the surface, who would not think it a duty of civility resolutely to oppose a person of so high dignity who would wish to wash his feet like a servant? But notwithstanding the immense repugnance that Peter has to it, sooner than offend Our Lord and be deprived of His grace, he obeys at once.

This is the fruit that I must draw from the example before us. O how fond I am of adhering to my own opinion, of maintaining my little points of etiquette; how I cling to my own judgment of things, without respect either to what the will of God or the love of Jesus Christ would direct me to do. Again, how reluctant am I to renounce any pursuit in which I may be engaged, though urged to do so by inspirations from God, by good advice and warnings from those who hold the place of God in my regard,—superiors, confessors, preachers.

O my God! how frequently have I thought more of putting into execution some favorite notion of my own than of performing Thy will; regardless of my own obstinacy and waywardness, and disguising it to myself under the pretext of justice and zeal, or under the appearance of charity and humility. It was nothing but pride. I now repent and accuse myself of it. Strip me, I beseech Thee, O merciful Jesus! of this inordinate self-love, which constantly leads me into sin and places me in imminent danger of perdition.

I shall no longer prefer my judgment to that of superiors; and I shall not have recourse to sophistry in order to

find excuses for disobedience, remembering the danger to which St. Peter was exposed,—of having no part with Jesus Christ, if he had not obeyed.

V. The washing of the feet concluded, Jesus Christ returns to the table and exhorts His Apostles to imitate His humility, giving us all to understand that He had humbled Himself for the very purpose that He might be imitated. In conformity with His constant practice—which is to teach in the first place by His example and afterward by His word,—He says to them: *Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Master and Lord, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them.*<sup>1</sup>

The argument is incontestable. If the most high God, He who is Lord of the universe, has thus humbled Himself to perform the part of the meanest servant, how much more should we humble ourselves who are nothing but earth, ashes, dust, and mire? Of all services, washing a person's feet is the lowest. Jesus meant to teach us by performing this action that we ought to be willing and glad to serve one another in less degrading offices, if the occasion presents itself; even to wash one another's feet;—which, in its true moral signification, is the same as saying, we should have compassion one for another, and forgive one another's errors and failings.

Truly Jesus Christ must greatly esteem the virtue of humility, since He came from heaven to earth on purpose to teach it. And it is no wonder; since without humility no virtue can be acquired or preserved, nor can we obtain salvation. There are saints in paradise who were neither martyrs, nor doctors, nor contemplatives, nor virgins;—but there is not a single one there who was not humble. Our Saviour is anxious that we should be humble, because He desires that we should be saved. How could He make

(1) St. John xiii, 12-15, 17.

salvation easier, since it is so easy to be humble, His own wonderful example alone being sufficient to make us practise humility?

O my Jesus and my God! nothing can be more true, nothing more worthy of Thee, than Thy heavenly doctrine. I am convinced, firmly persuaded, of this; and, nevertheless, I am not humble, nor do I make use of the means to become so. This I must confess, though it is painful and disgraceful for me to do so. I appear to love and desire this beautiful humility; but in practice, I actually abhor it; since, by the overwhelming force of my self-love, when opportunities to humble myself are at hand, I despise humiliations. How frequently during the day do I transgress and condemn the holy rules which Thou, my divine Master, hast deigned to give me! Thou hast not taught a mere humility of words, but one of feeling, of affection, of action, and for this I have not the slightest inclination. I am now almost afraid any longer to implore Thy help, since it is these very helps that I resist. What will become of me, profiting, as I do, neither by what Thou sayest, nor by what Thou dost. O ye angels and saints of heaven, who are in heaven on account of your humility, intercede for me, that by my pride I may not cast myself into hell.

Humility should be practised in resisting temptations to be too sensitive with regard to my own feelings; peevish, obstinate, and reluctant in obeying those who are above me. Moreover I should serve those who are beneath me in any manner that I can. If I do this, blessed am I.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### PREPARATION FOR THE INSTITUTION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT.

I. THROUGHOUT the entire Gospel history we do not find that, during the thirty-three years of His life, Jesus Christ performed any action for which He prepared with such

earnest application of soul as He did for the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament. How frequently did He think and speak of it beforehand as a marvelous invention of His love, which was wholly intent on the salvation of mankind! What interest did He not take in this action, sending in advance two of His favorite Apostles, selecting the guest-chamber, and giving all necessary directions relative to it!

All this was intended for our instruction. Although we should receive the Most Blessed Sacrament but once in the course of our lives, we ought to employ the whole of our lives in preparation for this one Communion. This is no less than what the greatness and dignity of the mystery demands. But divine Goodness having arranged that we should be permitted to receive it frequently, shall we consider it too much to make it a duty to prepare for Holy Communion by devoting some time to devout meditation?

The two Apostles who were sent to make the preparations for the Last Supper were figures of a holy life—that is, of pure faith and fervent charity; which we also should possess, if we would worthily approach the holy Table. The dining-room, beautifully adorned and ornamented with flowers, was likewise a figure of our soul, which, in order worthily to entertain as a Guest the most loving and most lovable of the sons of men, must be adorned with Christian virtues, and be spotless, fair and beautiful. I shall, therefore, reflect in what manner I am accustomed to prepare for the heavenly Banquet,—with what virtues, in what spirit, and with what fervor.

Ah! my Jesus, my Lord and my King, I am well aware that, in consideration of Thy august Majesty, all possible perfection and angelic sanctity ought to be offered to Thee in order worthily to receive Thee. I know that the guest-chamber of my heart should be prepared with the utmost purity and be totally free from the slightest stain. But on this account should I be discouraged? I ought to have and desire to have the most elevated sentiments of Thy infinite goodness. Therefore, trusting that I may not abuse the



confidence to which Thou dost invite me, I make bold with all simplicity to present to Thee one petition.

When a king purposes to lodge in the house of a poor man, he sends before him whatever is requisite to furnish it, as far as may be, in royal style. Do Thou the same, O King of kings, O good Jesus! My heart, in which Thou dost intend to take up Thy abode, is too confined a hovel, too dilapidated, too mean, to be worthy of Thy divine Majesty. Therefore, before Thou dost honor it with Thy venerable mysteries, send in advance whatever is needed to cleanse and embellish it, so that, as far as possible, it may become less unworthy of Thee. I can say no more. Better than I, Thou knowest what is wanting to me and what is suitable for Thee. I lay my soul open to Thee. I am thoroughly persuaded that Thou demandest nothing of me that is beyond my ability. I have so exalted an idea of Thy almighty goodness that I am at the same time convinced that, with Thy help, I can do great things.

While preparing for Communion I shall conceive a lively desire for those virtues that I do not possess, namely:—humility, charity, purity, and the rest. Moreover, I shall place my trust in the goodness of God, and believe that He will favorably accept and grant my desire.

II. We may suppose that another reason why Jesus Christ washed the feet of the Apostles was because He intended immediately to institute His venerable Sacrament, and to communicate it to them, thus at the same time teaching us with what purity we should prepare for this great mystery. The eleven Apostles were pure and clean, and had only some dust about their feet; nevertheless, He removed this dust, and threatened Peter that He would exclude him from the holy Table if he did not allow himself to be washed.

Here let us reflect: what are our feet which we must wash in order that we may be pure and in a proper state for receiving the Most Blessed Sacrament? They are the affections of our heart, which so easily become soiled by the dust of the world and by daily faults of frailty, ignorance,

negligence and malice. Therefore, before approaching the altar we should carefully examine our conscience—and we must pass over nothing lightly,—washing it perfectly clean, if we wish to prepare ourselves with the requisite degree of purity. It is not enough to be free from mortal sins, we must also wash away our venial faults;—reverence due to so great a mystery demands this.

By the washing of the feet of the Apostles we are admonished that we should go to Confession before approaching Communion, so that all our imperfections may be washed away and that our soul may be washed by the same Man-God who washed the Apostles' feet. But in what way do I go to Confession? With what diligence do I examine my conscience? What sorrow, what purpose of amendment have I, when I accuse myself of my sins; and in what manner do I endeavor to correct?

O my God! there is not a day in which I do not defile myself by my ingratitude, rebellion, and sloth. Although I have constant need of being washed, how often do I persuade myself—resting my opinion on dangerous and flattering probabilities—that what is in reality sin, is not so! Consequently, in some things I fancy that I am clean, when, in fact, I am unclean. My self-love is excessive. I am very much afraid that I belong to that class of hypocrites who in their own eyes are clean, though in truth they are more polluted than others. Who is there, in fact, who stands in more need than I do of being washed, as I am covered with dust,—not only my feet, but my hands, my eyes, and all my senses, as well as all my interior powers? But behold, O my Jesus, I now offer myself unreservedly to Thee. Who but Thou canst wash and cleanse me, as Thou dost by the Sacraments which Thou hast left to Thy Church? I cry to Thee for mercy; and with sincere sorrow for my past abuse of these Sacraments, I implore of Thee the grace, henceforth, so to make use of the Sacrament of Penance, that it may be for me a holy preparation for Communion.

I shall watch over my conscience, that it may not acquire

the habit of viewing things according to certain relaxed standards. Moreover, I shall earnestly strive to rid myself of habitual faults, which are the occasion of the imperfect dispositions with which I approach Confession and Communion.

III. We must remember what Jesus Christ said at the beginning of the Supper: namely, that with most ardent desire He had longed for that day, in order that He might abrogate the Old Law and adopt the New by the institution of His venerable Sacrament. This was the object of His ardent desires,—that the hour should arrive in which He was to consecrate the mysteries of our consolation and to give to us all, to eat, in place of the corruptible lamb, His own sacred Body, the Food of Immortality come down from heaven for this end. This hour, then, being come which for so long had been the object of His sighs and wishes, He immediately gives thanks to His heavenly Father with exceeding exultation.

Let us consider that His desires are recorded in the Gospel, that we may zealously be moved to imitate them;—and we have the strongest possible reason to do this. If our God, who has no need of us, out of His superabundant goodness and charity has so greatly desired to communicate Himself to us in the Eucharist, how greatly, on our side, ought we to desire to receive Him, as He is our only Treasure, containing in Himself all that is most delightful, profitable, and honorable! Desire is a species of heart-language, that speaks and prays with untold efficacy. Hence it is, that in proportion to the warmth of our desires for this divine Sacrament, shall we receive fruit from it and taste its delicious sweetness in our soul.

But what are my desires when I receive Communion? Alas! I am like the Jews in the wilderness, who loathed the manna that was rained down to them from heaven. What indifference, what languor, what tepidity! I open my mouth to receive this heavenly Food, more through custom than by any movement of devotion—more from

human respect than from heartfelt devotion; and becoming familiar to me, it has ceased to be precious.

O my God! if I consider on one side the intense desire that Thou hast to come to me, I am in amazement; for what is there in me to make me worthy of being a sanctuary for Thy Majesty, or to cause me to be an object of Thy delight and love? On the other side, I am filled with horror when I behold the lukewarm, cold manner in which I approach to receive Thee. O Jesus! desire of the everlasting hills, nourishment of the elect, most choice Food, who art all lovely, who replenishest with unspeakable delights those who hunger for Thee, whence is it that I value Thee so little, and have so little yearning for Thee? I do not love Thee. This is the reason that I long not for Thee. But blind, stupid soul, what dost thou love, what dost thou desire, if thou lovest not nor desirest that Lord who is sovereign Goodness, and who alone can satiate all thy desires?

I shall implore Jesus Christ to give me His love, so that one Communion may make me sigh for another. Meanwhile, I shall offer Him the desires of His Sacred Heart, with the desires of all holy souls who are true lovers of His Sacrament.

IV. When Jesus Christ was pleased to institute the venerable Sacrament at the Last Supper, the Evangelist says that He had His death before His eyes, foreseeing the proximate approach of the hour at which He was to pass from this world to His Eternal Father. He called this Sacrament a testament, to signify that His death was at hand. Moreover, he selected the Passover for this institution, not because it was the most distinguished of all solemnities, and consequently the most proper for the celebration of His mysteries, but from its denoting His own passage; also, for this reason, making choice of the last Passover of His life. At the same time He declared to His disciples that He would not eat any more with them till the kingdom of God should come; that is, until the new Church should be founded by His glorious Resurrection. Now,



what had the remembrance of His death to do with the institution of His Sacrament?

My soul, in this example we have one of the most powerful motives for preparing ourselves well for the holy Table. In imitation of Jesus Christ, I also, when about to communicate, shall think of my death. I shall receive Communion as though it were in preparation for dying and departing from this world; as if it were the Viaticum which I was receiving in my last illness, and as though this Communion were to be the last of my life; as if I were in reality never again to receive the Body of Jesus Christ; having before me only the hope of enjoying Him in heaven at the great marriage supper prepared by God for the blessed nuptials of the Lamb.

If I knew for a certainty that the next Communion that I shall receive were to be my last, in what manner does it now appear to me I should desire to receive it? Receiving within me the sovereign Judge, who is soon to pronounce on me the final sentence for heaven or hell, who for all eternity will be either my happiness or my torment—with what humility, purity and devotion would I strive to receive Him, at least for this once compensating with all the fervor that I am able for past lukewarmness and neglect.

O my God! engrave this idea deeply in my mind, so that each time that I prepare for Communion may be as it were the last; remembering that, one time or another, to that Communion which shall be my last I have infallibly to come, and this when I least think of it. Likewise, in my thanksgiving after Communion make me mindful of my death, that I may exercise myself in acts of faith, hope, and charity, as if I were actually about to die, and had, after Communion, to commend my soul into Thy hands. O good Jesus! sanctify, I beseech Thee, my heart; cleanse it of all malice, and fill it with Thy grace, in order that, feeding on Thee, I may live by Thee and for Thee, so as to enjoy Thee eternally hereafter in Thy glory.

When I come to die, with what Communions shall I be



satisfied? of what Communion shall I repent? I will reflect on these two points, and now provide for that time.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### INSTITUTION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT.

I. JESUS CHRIST, returning to the table after the washing of the feet, brings the rites and sacrifices of the Old Law to their conclusion, making of Himself a new sacrifice by the institution of His Most Blessed Sacrament. He might have selected any other time of His life for instituting it, but He awaited the day previous to His death, immediately before the commencement of His bitter Passion, in order that He might demonstrate in a more striking manner the beauty and perfection of His love, and might animate our hearts more powerfully to love Him in return. At the very time when men are deliberating how to put Him to death, He institutes for men a Sacrament which shall be to them a fountain of life,—of life so much the more abundant as His death is to be more painful.

Let us ponder the excess of this love. While men are devising against Jesus Christ injustices, persecutions, dishonors, outrages and torments, He gives to men, as a legacy, the richest treasure that can be found in the storehouse of the divine Wisdom and Omnipotence. At the very time that men, for their malice and wickedness, most richly deserve to be abandoned by Him, He is inventing a marvelous contrivance by which to perpetuate His loving abode among men. Oh, astounding kindness and love! which the torrents of men's iniquities, instead of extinguishing or decreasing, cause only to break out into a brighter flame.

The Apostle St. Paul, by meditating upon the reflection, that neither the scourges, nor the nails, nor any torment whatever had been sufficient to separate Jesus Christ from His love for us, was led to break out, on his part, into a transport of zeal, and to exclaim that nothing in this world,

however grievous and painful it might be, shall be able to separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. In saying this, he did not only speak of himself with the zeal of an Apostle, but he referred to us also in our character of Christians. Notwithstanding, how different, alas! are the sentiments which I entertain.

The love Thou dost bear me, my most loving Saviour, I perceive is a love constant in every trial; while the love I bear Thee is so weak that the smallest difficulty causes it to vanish. Any trifling occasion, any slight temptation, is sufficient to separate me from Thee;—far from supporting persecutions and pains for Thy love, I have not resolution to mortify even the most insignificant passion for Thee. Ah, my Jesus! who so often comest to me in the adorable Sacrament, make me experience the sweetness of Thy presence, so that my soul may be animated and strengthened to love Thee better. I humbly ask to love Thee—not with a tender love, but with a love strong and solid like that which Thou hast for me.

Doing good to those who injure me will be imitating Jesus Christ, who, in conformity with His own holy doctrine, gave us in His Sacrament the totality of every good while the utmost evil was being concocted against Him.

II. St. John mentions the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament in a few short words when he says that Jesus Christ, having always had a great love for His own, who were in this world, loved them especially at the close of His life with a more ardent and vehement love, by leaving to them a gift—the greatest of all gifts,—in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which may be called the Sacrament of His ineffable love; and He left them this gift as His last, in order that it might make a deeper impression on our hearts.

As the Eternal Father has made known to us the immensity of His love for us by giving us His only-begotten Son, because in giving Him to us He gave us His all, so the same Son of God, in token of His excessive love, gave us Himself, and in giving us Himself He gave us all that He

possessed; in fact, not being able to give us here in this world any gift greater, more expensive, more sweet, or more advantageous to us.

In this admirable Sacrament He has placed at our command His own body, His flesh, and His blood, and with these His soul, His Humanity, His Divinity, and the treasures of His infinite merits. Exert, O my soul! all thy vast capacity of thought and conceive within thyself what Jesus Christ, the Man-God, could give or leave to thee more precious than this His last legacy. It was all done to make thee understand to what an excess He really loves thee, and how much thou art bound to love Him in return.

What am I, O my God! that Thou hast so great love for me, and dost so earnestly seek to be loved by me? I am a wretched little creature of Thy hand, and I can see in myself nothing worthy of Thy almighty Majesty. I wonder, therefore, at Thy love in the most august Sacrament. But I should wonder still more at myself, who am insensible to Thy love and not thankful to Thee. O my soul! how long shall we remain ungrateful for this most tender charity? O Jesus, I desire to love Thee and to be grateful to Thee. Strengthen, I beseech Thee, my will with Thy invigorating grace, for of itself it can not act.

And what shall I render unto Thee for Thy love? Thou dost give to me all that Thou art, and all that Thou hast. In exchange I offer to Thee, in the best way I know and am able, all that I am, and have, or ever shall have. I will employ all in Thy service. Assist me with Thy grace, that in reality I may fulfil the desire that I have to please Thee in return for all that I owe Thee for the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

I shall enter into detail, and present my memory, my understanding, my will, my eyes, my tongue, etc., and all my interior affections, convinced that prayer is worth very little which consists of nothing but lofty generalities and leads to no practical results.

III. Jesus Christ our Lord, the High Priest forever, prefigured in Melchisedec, who alone, under the Old Testa-

ment, offered to the Most High a sacrifice, not of animals, but of bread and wine, as He sits at table takes bread into His holy and venerable hands, and raising His eyes to His almighty Father, blesses and consecrates it with these words: *This is my body*.<sup>1</sup> In like manner, He takes the chalice in which was prepared wine, and says, *This is my blood*.<sup>2</sup> He has no sooner uttered these words than the bread is no longer bread, but His real Body; and the wine is no longer wine, but His real Blood.

We do not inquire how this was possible, or how it was done. This would be to imitate the wicked incredulity of the Jews. As God made Himself man in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost, without the help of man, so now, by the same power, is the bread changed into the substance of our God made man. Again, as in the person of Jesus Christ God was hidden under human flesh, which alone was visible, so, in the Blessed Sacrament, the Man-God is concealed under the visible appearances of bread and wine. Thus in the Incarnation as well as in the Eucharist is fulfilled the prophecy that our God is a hidden God. My soul, let us not penetrate too deeply into reasonings on this subject. Our reason here falls short, and faith must supply for it by adoring the infinite goodness, the wisdom, and the omnipotence of God.

Therefore, O my Lord Jesus Christ! with all the strength and energy of my soul I believe that by the power of Thy infallible word Thou art present in the consecrated Host, true God and true Man, whole and entire, soul and body, the substance of Thy Divinity united to Thy sacred Humanity. Thou hast said it, and it is so. Heaven and earth will fail, but Thy eternal word will never fail of truth. I shall live and die convinced of this firm, unshaken truth.

I am happy, O my hidden God! that I do not behold Thee in the Sacrament. I rejoice that I do not understand this sublime mystery; therefore, I can do Thee greater honor by the humiliation of my senses and of my reason.

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Mark xiv, 22.

(<sup>2</sup>) Ibid., 24.

If I do not believe with that entire faith which is due to Thee, increase it and give it a new impetus within me. For the present, I offer to Thee the heroic faith of the most illustrious saints of Thy Church; especially of those who have shed their blood and given their life in defence of the truth of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

I shall pray Jesus Christ to bestow this manner of faith on me, and contrition, devotion, and profound reverence corresponding with this faith; not only when I receive Holy Communion, but whenever I shall visit Thee, O my God! in the most august Sacrament.

IV. Jesus Christ chose bread in preference to other substance for the Eucharist, that He might leave it to us as a perpetual memorial of His Passion. He had already compared Himself to a grain of wheat; and now, in the Sacrament, He wishes us to comprehend that what is done to wheat, which is beaten, ground, and pulverized in order that it may be made into bread, the same is also done to Him when, during the agony of His Passion, He was wholly ground and beaten down. Therefore, He expects that the Eucharistic Bread should remind us of that immense love by which He chose to suffer and to die for us upon the cross, every Communion giving us an opportunity to meditate on His sorrowful Passion.

The Passion of Jesus Christ is the basis, above all, on which rests our hope of eternal salvation. Consequently, His Passion being represented and commemorated in the Most Blessed Sacrament, with what confidence should not this Sacrament inspire us? With good reason does the Church, in adoration of this holy Banquet, exultingly declare that in it is left to us a memorial of the Passion of the Son of God and a pledge of our share in His eternal glory. For how, in fact, can we doubt of our eternal salvation when the Saviour belongs entirely to us, having made Himself our food to the end that here, in this life, we may live one and the same life with Him, and hereafter we may live again by His life eternally in heaven?

Dost thou, my soul, at times allow thyself to be over-



whelmed by sadness, ruminating dismally with thyself and saying: Who knows whether or not I shall be saved? Ah! trust in thy God made man and given to thee in the Sacrament. Trust in Him with unwavering confidence. To make thee sure of heaven, what couldst thou think of wishing for, after Jesus Christ has died for thee and left to thee, as an earnest of heaven, not only His merits, but His entire self as well?

Praise, benediction, and thanks be to Thee, my Jesus! for the hope of salvation which Thou givest me in Thy sacred Passion, which to Thee was so bitter, but is made so sweet to me in the Most Holy Sacrament. Now I do not see Thee in Thy blessed Majesty, for as yet it is hidden; but I hope soon to behold Thee face to face in heaven. Yes, yes, I hope for the glory of Paradise; and with such unbounded assurance do I hope, that nothing shall be able to cause me to fear, thanks to that Bread of eternal life which Thou hast prepared for me on Thy holy Table to comfort and support me in all my trials. I might fear that salvation—of which I have full security, as far as regards Thy share in it—should be forfeited by my fault if I neglect the means requisite for obtaining it. With respect to this, also, I place my confidence in the power of Thy glorious Sacrament, which shall be to me all in all, light, and strength.

Before and after Communion I shall recollect the sufferings undergone for me by Jesus Christ. My Communions will be devout and fruitful in proportion to my efforts to excite within myself holy affections on His sorrowful Passion.

V. There is another reason why Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist under the form of bread rather than of any other food. Bread is composed of grains collected together, then ground into flour, and kneaded. Therefore has He taken it as the matter of this Sacrament, which is a symbol of that union, peace, and charity which His followers should strive to maintain with one another. Moreover, He has also ordered that, when we approach the altar, if we are not in

charity with our neighbor we should first go and be reconciled; because charity is what He loves and has at heart more than anything else.

The very name of *Communion* expresses this. The word, indeed, first signifies the reciprocal or common union between Jesus Christ and the soul, but it equally denotes the like union between us and our neighbors; so that a man does not, in truth, receive Communion if he is not at peace and in union with all. The Most Holy Eucharist is a mystery of fraternal charity, and it is this very charity that constitutes the essential spirit of Christianity.

But as charity can not subsist without humility, remark the example of humility that Jesus Christ gives us at the same time in the Eucharist. Profound, indeed, was His humility in the Incarnation when He made Himself lowly, confining to the limits of the person of a man His immense greatness, which the utmost bounds of heaven can not contain. But in the Eucharist it is far more profound; there He encloses, under the appearance of bread, both His Divinity and Humanity. This is truly a marvel,—that the Man-God should have condescended to become the food of men. How could the Eternal Word, the Food of angels in glory, by any possibility come down so low as to make Himself bread in order that He might be eaten by man?

With what sincerity, then, should I from my very heart at Communion repeat those words, *Domine, non sum dignus*, as a protestation of my unworthiness to receive my Lord and God! Still more notable is my unworthiness when viewed in the light of Thy humility, since Thou being God most high dost conceal Thy greatness in the Sacrament, and I, a vile worm, proudly love and long to show myself. I would wish to humble myself as Thou dost; but as I am of myself a miserable nothing, whither can I descend lower than this my nothingness?

Ah, my Jesus! who dost breathe but humility and charity in the Blessed Sacrament, impart to me that humility at least which is necessary to enable me to live in charity with my neighbor. I confess my past transgressions, and that on

account of my pride alone I have never possessed a spark of that charity which Thou dost command. But now, I beseech Thee, have pity on me and help me by Thy grace. I offer to Thee my resentments and my wounded feelings; I offer Thee my heart, and I pray Thee so to dispose it that henceforth I may love Thee perfectly and love my neighbor for love of Thee.

Before and after Communion I shall occupy myself in making acts of humility, acknowledging my own unworthiness, and in acts of charity resolving that, for the future, peace shall not be broken or disturbed through my fault with any one, whoever it may be.

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## CHAPTER X.

### JESUS CHRIST GIVES THE SACRAMENT AND THE POWER OF CONSECRATING TO HIS APOSTLES.

I. AFTER having changed the bread into His own Body and the wine into His own Blood, Jesus Christ, as the first and great High Priest of His Church, communicates first to Himself the Blessed Sacrament, then, with marks of the most tender affection, gives it to the Apostles. He directs each to take his own portion, thus conferring on them the sacerdotal dignity and ministry which they at once begin to exercise, by each one giving to himself Communion with his own hand. Consider here the dignity, the perfect order, and the charity with which Jesus performs this religious rite,—than which nothing could possibly be more conducive to devotion. O what delight, what sweetness, does He experience at this Supper, at which He is at one and the same time the Giver of the Banquet, and the Banquet itself!

The Apostles, whose minds are possessed by a clear light of faith, would not have dared touch, still less put into their mouth, this most august Sacrament; but Jesus Christ commands it and they obey, notwithstanding the conscious-

ness of their unworthiness. Who now can conceive the humility with which, as was most fitting, they receive within themselves the Saviour of the world at this first of Communion? Who can imagine the sweetness of those tears of affection and compunction which they shed, or the marvelous effects of consolation and fervor produced in their hearts?

If the Apostle St. Peter acknowledged and confessed Jesus Christ to be God by the simple power of a single discourse, which He had just heard upon the Eucharist, oh! what a flood of light will he not receive at the actual institution of it? I recall to mind how the same Peter displayed his feelings when, with his knowledge of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, he would not consent that He should come near to him, a sinner, nor that he should attempt to wash his feet. What, then, must he say now, on beholding his Master, the Man-God, choosing to come into his breast and entering into his very body? It is difficult to answer this question. Nevertheless, I must learn from him in what manner *to approach* the Holy Communion with fear and love. I shall not fail to fear and love, if I only meditate on the excellence of the royal and divine Food that I receive at the holy Table.

O my Jesus, great God and Lover of the humble! infuse into me those sentiments of esteem and reverence with which Thou didst receive Thyself. In return I shall offer to Thee all those gifts of grace which Thou wilt be pleased to grant me. O eternal Truth, O true Love, and beloved Eternity, my God, hear the voice of my sighs! O glorious Apostles! obtain for me from the Lord those sentiments of humility and charity which you had before and after that first Communion, so that every Communion of mine may redound to the glory of God and be fruitful to myself.

In proportion to our faith will also be the devotion with which we make our preparation and thanksgiving for Communion. Therefore, I shall ask of God to give me faith, and I shall frequently revolve in my mind what motives are proper to excite it.



II. When the Son of God made Himself Man, that He might dwell among men, He came forth from the bosom of His Father without leaving His Father. Now that the time has arrived for Him to return to His Father, He has devised a way to go from among men without leaving men; that is, by instituting the Sacrament of the Eucharist and by giving the power of consecration not to the Apostles only, but to all priests, their successors in the Catholic Church. *What I have done*, He says to them, namely, *consecrating my Body and Blood, do you also do; I only desire that whenever you shall do it, you do it in commemoration of Me.*<sup>1</sup> O almighty words! full of truth and charity really divine!

What a rare consolation it is for us every day to assist at holy Mass, and witness the celebration of the very same mystery that was celebrated at the Last Supper, and to offer to the Eternal Father the very same sacrifice that was offered on Calvary; renewing and collecting the fruit of that most excellent oblation, the most meritorious, the most lovely, the most acceptable that could possibly be made to the divine Majesty! What a rare consolation for us to have always in our churches Jesus Christ Himself, and every convenience to visit and to receive Him whenever we please. Thus we are enabled continually to adore and praise the Lamb without spot, as the blessed do in heaven! Could our Lord give us more—He has given us Himself, and that forever? Which of us could for a moment have entertained the thought of asking for so much?

He foresaw the irreverences, the indignities, the profanations, and the sacrileges with which we should slight and outrage Him in the Eucharist. Nevertheless, He decided to bind Himself to remain with us always, even to the end of the world; exposed to insults and contempt, paying no regard to His own dignity nor to His divine person. Especially if I look only at myself, Our Saviour foresaw that I too would be one of those—His disloyal children—who would outrage Him by want of faith, reverence, and

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke xxii, 19.



love; by disrespectful behavior in His sacred temples; by assisting at Mass without devotion; by receiving Him in Holy Communion with a heart attached to vanity. Notwithstanding all this, He makes it His delight to dwell with me in the Most Blessed Sacrament. O infinite goodness and condescension! See, my soul, how great thy obligation is to correspond with such love!

I acknowledge, O good Jesus! my immense debt of gratitude to Thee, and also how devoid I am of thankfulness. My shame would urge me to hide beneath the earth; but with the confidence which Thou dost inspire I present myself before Thee. As Thou, in the Eucharist, sittest, as it were, on a throne of mercy and of grace, I crave of Thee mercy for the past and grace to be grateful to Thee for the time to come. Thou art wholly mine, and I ought to be entirely Thine. Thou art my All, and this should be my one and only pleasure to please and to enjoy Thee, and in Thee to place my happiness and delight.

With strong faith, I shall frequently visit Jesus Christ, who is in the Most Blessed Sacrament—not in figure, nor by representation, but in reality in His glorious person; and I will cultivate great devotion to the holy Mass.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ZEAL OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE CONVERSION OF JUDAS.

I. JESUS CHRIST is aware of the treachery that Judas is planning, and being exceedingly grieved at the lamentable state of this Apostle, who is led away by diabolical malice, He determines to leave nothing untried that a loving Saviour can do to convert him. Therefore, after doing him the honor of keeping his place among the other Apostles at this solemn Supper, although he was most unworthy of it, He prepares also to wash his feet. It is not improbable that this mystical washing began with Judas, as perhaps he may have had the effrontery to put himself in the first place

before Peter; or, moreover, by the merciful dispensation of the heavenly Physician, mainly intent on the cure of him who needed it most. In this action who will not admire the greatness of God's clemency, moved to pity for a soul that was running headlong to iniquity?

Let us contemplate the Incarnate Son of the Most High God, upon His knees, on the ground, taking into His sacred hands and washing the unclean feet of Judas. See how He caresses, embraces, and kisses them, pressing them to His Heart with indescribable tenderness! The Evangelist St. John, in the first place, remarks the horrible sacrilege of the treason which the devil had put into the heart of Judas. Then, with dread and amazement he relates to what a depth of humiliation the King of glory descended when He performed, for the very man who was betraying Him, the lowest office of a servant, to give him an unmistakable token of His unconquerable love.

Whilst Jesus is washing this Apostle's feet, though he is no longer an Apostle except in name, what does He not do to wash also his soul, which was far more unclean? No one knows what He speaks to his soul by secret inspiration; but we may easily believe that, with most ardent charity, He exhorts and implores him to withdraw from the desperate wickedness to which he is enslaved. The wretch remains unmoved by this humility which astonishes the angels; and takes not the least advantage of the loving counsels of a God humbled to the attitude of a suppliant.

At which, O my sweet Jesus! should I marvel the more? The humility and charity with which Thou dost give so loving an indication of Thy character of Saviour, or the obstinacy and desperate hardness of heart of the traitor? How often has my own heart been hard, like that of Judas, when I have resisted Thy sweet and powerful attractions? O my God! I repent of the rebellions and perverseness of my will. Give me another heart, I beseech Thee,—a pliant heart, that may yield with docility to Thy inspirations. What shall I listen to if not to the voice of a God who loves me, who calls and urges me, in order that He may

give me His grace in this world, and afterward His eternal glory in the other?

I offer to God my heart, that is, my will,—no longer a disobedient, contumacious will, but a will disposed to obey the word and to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

II. The Son of God, beholding the obstinate hardness of Judas's heart, which is in no degree softened or touched by the washing of his feet, finishes what He had begun, and having again seated Himself at the table, in a prophetic strain breaks forth into lamentations that one of those who sit at meat with Him, unthankfully rejecting His grace, is about to betray Him, and with those very feet which He has washed, caressed, and kissed.

In alluding to this He heaves a deep sigh, thus giving vent to the sorrow of His Heart, and all at once He is troubled in spirit, looking on the miserable traitor with an eye of pity and evidencing, by His mournful expression, the affliction of His most compassionate Heart. The Son of God is troubled, not through infirmity of mind, as though afflicted for Himself, because He is to be betrayed; He is troubled because He elects to be troubled, and by His trouble He demonstrates the grievous pain that it gives Him to see His Apostle fallen from His exalted dignity and given over as a prey to the devil, who is hurrying him on to perdition.

Moreover, the Son of God, with great vehemence of zeal, protests that He has endeavored with unparalleled humility to bring this miserable man to repentance; that, as far as in Him lay, He has lovingly desired to save him and that He has no part in his perdition. But not even for all this does Judas repent, or show any feeling, or enter into himself. Oh, what mercy in the Saviour! and oh, what perverseness in the sinner!

But what profit do I gain by being thus lost in astonishment at Judas for not corresponding with the sweet attractions of the goodness of God? Rather let me enter into myself and reflect that Jesus Christ has no less love for me than He had for Judas. He protests also concerning me

that my soul is dear to Him; that He has an ardent desire to save me; and that if I am lost, it will be through my own fault. This same protestation He will make on the Day of Judgment, causing it to appear plainly before the eyes of all the world that He has done His part toward my eternal salvation.

And what shall I do, what shall I say, O my God! on that day in self-defence; when I shall see, on the one hand, those numberless graces, exterior and interior, which I have had; and, on the other, how ungrateful for them all I have been? Who knows if, on that day, the whole universe will not behold that I have been worse than Judas? Thy mercy pursues me in every place. I actually fly from it; and if sometimes I am so pressed that I can not evade it, then even I resist it. Certain thoughts arise of practising some act of virtue, or of getting rid of some vicious inclination. I disregard them, I despise them, because I persuade myself that they are mere imaginations of my own. I deceive myself. Give me, then, my Jesus, I beseech Thee, a right spirit to understand that everything within me that animates me to good or deters me from evil is an inspiration from Thee; and give me also a will full of love and promptitude to obey it.

I shall value greatly the inspirations of God, even when the matter to which they relate seems trifling; because resisting these inspirations may occasion the withdrawal of many graces and eventually bring about my eternal ruin.

III. Overflowing with love for the soul of Judas, Jesus Christ advances one step more to gain it. He declares in a striking manner, in presence of His Apostles, that He knows who the traitor is, and that He is one of the twelve. In saying this He gives an evident proof that He is God, inasmuch as He foresees the betrayal of Himself which is about to take place, and beholds in the traitor's heart his most hidden thoughts. Ought not this to have brought Judas to another mind, as he now must clearly see that it was a God with whom he had to deal, a God to whom all the wickedness of his heart was already known? Was it not



enough to bring him to reflection, to contemplate, as he does at present, the goodness of God, who knew the traitor and endured him; who, instead of reproaching him and putting him to shame, counseled him with so much tenderness, constrained him by such sweet violence to repentance? And yet, while a God is speaking thus to Judas, Judas thinks not of God, but remains fixed in his wicked purpose to betray Him.

On hearing these words of Our Saviour, *One of you is about to betray Me*,<sup>1</sup> the other Apostles are pierced to the heart with grief; with amazement they look at one another; pale and trembling, each begins to examine himself, looking on himself as capable, through human frailty, of all manner of iniquity. At the same time that the innocent fear and tremble with gloomy apprehensions, Judas, who is the guilty one, neither fears nor doubts of anything, but obstinately persists in his criminal purpose.

I must take instruction for myself. The saints in Paradise, when they were in this life, feared lest they should be lost, and thus it was that they came to be saved. This fear made them cautious in avoiding dangers, and careful in working out their salvation. The damned in hell lived as if they were secure of being saved, and precisely for this reason they have been lost. Their presumptuous security made them live in a thoughtless manner; and this thoughtlessness brought them to perdition. Fear belongs to the elect; presumption appertains to the reprobate. To which class do I belong?

If I look at the sins that I have committed, and which at all hours I am in danger of committing, I have just cause to entertain the liveliest fear concerning my eternal salvation; yet I do not fear, because I do not make use of the caution and diligence that I ought in the conduct of my life. Give me, O my Jesus! that fear which is the beginning of wisdom and which is Thy gift. Great is my appreciation of Thy loving kindness; and likewise is the knowledge that I have of my own unworthiness; for I am capable

(1) St. Matt. xxvi, 21.



of betraying Thee more basely than Judas, and I shall betray Thee, if Thou dost not restrain me by Thy holy fear. Grant, then, that while I contemplate Thee as the Father of mercies and the God of consolations, I may not forget that Thou art also the God of vengeance, the just Judge, terrible in His counsels; so that my hope may not make me vain and that fear may keep me grounded in humility.

I shall not trust in myself, and I shall take care to fly occasions of sin. This is the fear I must have in order to be saved; and I shall make sure of my salvation in proportion to the diligence with which I remain thus humble and in fear.

IV. The charity of Jesus toward Judas is not yet satisfied. After saying, in a general way, that the traitor is one of the twelve, He points out the particular person by adding, that he to whom He shall give bread dipped in the dish shall betray Him, and then immediately gives it to Judas. This is by way of admonishing him, without mentioning his name. Judas, who ought to have applied to himself both the words and the action, applies them not and profits by nothing, abusing the patience of Our Saviour and becoming more hardened.

Jesus Christ passes from kindness to severity. He threatens that the most terrible woes shall fall on him who betrays Him. This He does in order that Judas may enter into himself and acknowledge his guilt. All is in vain: yielding to the poisonous effects and fascination of malice, he obstinately refuses to be overcome either by kindness or rigor. Like an untamed beast, nothing is capable of subduing or restraining him.

Let us consider the admirable mercy of God. But at the same time how just is His severity when, as so frequently happens, men reach such a degree of wickedness that warnings and corrections are no longer of any avail. But let us observe how Judas was brought to the final excess of evil. Behold the cunning of this wily hypocrite. He feigns to be a friend of Jesus Christ, when in reality he is His enemy. He puts his hand with Him into the dish. He eats with a

cheerful countenance, to appear as an innocent man whose conscience reproaches him with nothing. Such is the effrontery with which he seeks to hide and cover his wickedness, as he prefers to be a traitor rather than to look like one. When a soul has arrived at this stage there is no cure. There is no instance on record of a hypocrite's being converted. He is veritably that wicked man spoken of in Scripture who contemneth all proper and salutary means for his conversion.

O God of Majesty! to Thee do I breathe out my prayers and sighs from the bottom of my heart. Never, oh, never! allow me to be brought to the condition of obstinate hardness of heart. If in Thy justice Thou wilt chastise me, send me any other punishment than this. Make me blind, deaf and dumb, crippled in every limb. I shall adore and give thanks to Thy mercy beneath all these afflictions, but suffer me not to become incorrigible and rebellious against Thy saving admonitions. Look down upon me, then, and free me from hypocrisy, which I perceive has dominion over me, since I am often more solicitous to conceal than to amend my wickedness; to appear virtuous than to be so in reality. This vice is the child of pride and can not be cured except by holy humility, which I implore and hope to obtain from Thy infinite goodness.

I shall cherish the greatest possible aversion and abhorrence to the vice of hypocrisy, and I shall diligently watch over my conduct and see where my intentions are directed, so that this passion may not secretly infect them.

V. Judas had been a poor man in an obscure village. Therefore, with extraordinary condescension, Our Lord took notice of him and chose him as one of His disciples. Besides, He had honored him with the title of Apostle, and again among the Apostles had selected him as the procurator of His holy family. Moreover, Jesus Christ had conferred on Judas power over the devils, the gift of miracles, with innumerable other graces corresponding to the exalted station he occupied. When after all these favors he had been blinded by his own fault, and had gone headlong

into impiety, what did not the Saviour of the world, in His immense charity, say and do to raise him up again!

Among other means that He made use of was one to awaken in the mind of Judas the remembrance of the multitude of favors which the divine Goodness had heaped upon him. Indeed, how could he have ever brought himself to the perpetration of the sacrilegious enormity in which he was engaged if he had called to mind the untold obligations under which he lay to Jesus Christ, who had lavished upon him such marks of especial predilection? But not even this had any effect, because the ungrateful traitor paid regard to nothing. Nay, on the contrary, the experience that he had had of the almighty power, of the humility and kindness of Jesus, made him far more savage than any wild beast.

Well might Jesus Christ have called upon heaven and earth to witness His most tender charity, and have cried out: *What more should I have done for the conversion of Judas, my unfaithful Apostle? I have tried the effect of love, of honors, of lowly services, of warnings, threats, entreaties, but he despised all. What more was there to say or to do; what have I omitted?* But a time will come when Jesus shall say the same of me. Reflect, O my soul, on what thy loving Saviour has done and is still doing for thy eternal salvation. In what respect has the divine Mercy been wanting to thee? Oh, where is it now wanting, if thou dost consider the overflowing torrent of graces, spiritual and temporal, general and particular, that thou hast received?

O my God, how good art Thou! and oh, how wicked am I! Will it always be the case, that I am to be forever more ungrateful to Thee in proportion as I see Thee more unceasingly prodigal of Thy favors to me? What moment of my life is there in which Thou art not doing me good, and laying upon me new obligations to love Thee? I am humbled and confounded; I grieve and repent of my ingratitude; and as I know that this, beyond everything, stands in the way and stops the current of those graces

which Thy goodness is disposed to impart to me, I recommend myself to Thy mercy and clemency. Regard not, I beseech Thee, what I have been. Call me now, and I shall be prepared to answer. Command, and I shall obey. I will be grateful to Thee, I will love Thee, encouraged and assisted by Thy grace.

I shall call to mind the multitude of favors that God has granted, and still grants me, that at least I may no longer offend Him. The one favor of having preserved me from falling into hell, which I have so often deserved, is sufficient to cause me to return thanks without ceasing.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### PERFIDY OF JUDAS IN BETRAYING JESUS CHRIST.

I. AFTER Jesus Christ had instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament, He gives It to the Apostles, and also to Judas, who is not excluded from this Last Supper. To him, also, our most loving Saviour imparts, under both forms, His most sacred Body and His most precious Blood that nothing may be left untried for his conversion, and that he too may have the benefit of that means which might have been the most efficacious of all to cause him to repent of his ingratitude and perfidy. But no sooner has he received It, than the devil enters into him. At the moment that he consented to the temptation he delivered himself up a prey to Satan, but the devil had not as yet taken entire possession of him. He took full possession of him only after this sacrilegious Communion.

The Blessed Sacrament is one and the same for all. But while It is a food of life to the other Apostles, It is to Judas a food of death. In Itself the Blessed Sacrament is most excellent, a most powerful means of salvation to souls. However, It becomes the occasion of condemnation to Judas, who receives It unworthily. He is immediately filled with cruelty and fury and he puts a seal upon his hard



heart, made obstinate in malice, by an act of sacrilege. Oh, how fearful a thing is an unworthy Communion, by which the Eucharist, the life-giving food, is changed into deadly poison through the fault of him who receives It in sin! Judas received Communion but once. This once was done unworthily, and it was the means of bringing him to the extremity of ruin.

Let us reflect that when Judas received Communion he had not as yet carried into effect the betrayal of his divine Master. He had only thought of it; with his will he had consented to betray Him, and by this sin, committed not in deed but only in thought, his Communion became a sacrilege. Hence, we may learn that sins of thought are sometimes more hurtful to the soul than sins committed outwardly, because so little account is made of them. May God preserve me from ever receiving Communion with my conscience defiled with even one sin.

O my God! if Thou seest that I shall ever receive Communion with the guilt of mortal sin upon my conscience, most earnestly do I implore Thee to take me out of this world rather than suffer me to be capable of so terrible impiety. I have great fear about my past Communions. My life has been very, very tepid, and I can not be sure of having always had the sorrow and the purpose of amendment requisite for a good Confession. But now I am grieved for all my wickedness as it appears in Thy eyes. Permit not that the Most Blessed Sacrament, which was instituted for my salvation, should become for me an occasion of perdition. In order that It may be the means of my salvation, cause me to receive It with purity and devotion.

Judas's first Communion was also his last. Woe to me if I ever make even one sacrilegious Communion, since that one may be my last and I may eat my own damnation by It! I shall preserve this fear at all times in my heart.

II. Judas had scarcely received the most holy Eucharist when he immediately leaves the supper room. The other Apostles, after the example of Jesus Christ, who has returned thanks to the Eternal Father for so signal a grace



conferred upon the Church, remain in devout recollection, and by fervent acts of humility and charity give thanks to the Lord, who has communicated Himself to them in the Sacrament. The reprobate Apostle acts differently; he entertains other thoughts in his mind. In receiving the Body and Blood of the Man-God he had no sentiment of compunction; and afterward, likewise, he had not the slightest feeling of devotion within him. Therefore, he immediately withdraws, without reverence and respect for the divine Master whom he has in his breast.

If Judas had not departed; if, reflecting as he ought to have done on the grandeur of this mystery, he had waited in the company of his most loving Saviour, whom he had within his own breast, perchance he would have turned away from his wickedness, have repented and not committed his projected crime, on account of the special lights and helps that he would have received at that most blessed moment. Oh, unhappy Judas, to refuse this mark of courtesy and attention to that God who came to bestow upon thee the treasures of His grace!

Assuredly they are imitators of Judas who, after receiving Holy Communion, go away in haste without making a suitable thanksgiving. Wretched that we are! we are strictly obliged to give thanks to the Lord unceasingly for His benefits, which we receive at every moment. We are bound to thank Him after our meals, when we have taken food for our bodies; but how much more are we obliged to return to Him our most heartfelt thanks after Communion, for the ineffable gift with which He has favored us, as we are instructed by the example of Our Lord Himself! Not drowsy, but dead indeed must be that soul which, after having received Communion, is cold and without feeling.

What then must I say of myself who, after Communion, have my mind and heart so often filled in a moment with distractions, am vain and dissipated, leaving Jesus Christ alone, as if His divine presence were a burden to me! Ah, my soul, when should we be attentive and excite our liveliest affections, if not when we have our most loving God

with us? And yet, in what haste am I to leave Him! How soon am I wearied in entertaining Him! Ah, my God! I am grieved at my irreverence, negligence, tepidity, and coldness. I now thank Thee for the many times that I neglected to return thanks to Thee, and I implore Thee to grant me this favor—that I may always remember to thank Thee for Thy mercies which Thou dost bestow upon me in so great abundance in Thy Most Holy Sacrament.

After Communion I shall remember Judas, driven to extreme guilt because he was then without devotion. I will consider as coming from the devil all impatience to leave Thee at that time and go away. I shall think of nothing but of making my thanksgiving properly and with affection.

III. Jesus Christ beholds Judas rising from the table in haste and going away. He is perfectly aware of his intention, but He says nothing more to him, either to divert him from his treachery or to prevent its perpetration. He only tells him to go and do what he purposes to do, and to do it quickly. This is not a command, but a prediction, or a permission, by which Jesus Christ declares His neutrality; neither restraining the traitor, nor urging him on, nor desiring by any means his perdition, though invariably maintaining His desire for the Redemption of the world. By these words He gives us to understand that He fears nothing, and that He is prepared to fulfil with intrepid resolution, in everything, the will of His Father.

These words contain also a reproach to Judas. Jesus Christ implies, that after having said and done so much to convert him, He now leaves him a prey to the perverseness of his will. *Since thou wilt have it thus, I leave thee to thyself: go even and do all that thou seest fit to do. I shall no longer have that tender care of thee which I have thus far had.* Behold the unhappy state to which a man sometimes may come in a moment. The Almighty God, after having with exceeding long-suffering and patience borne with and waited for some persons up to a certain point, at length abandons them in the darkness which they

have chosen for themselves, and permits them to indulge their blind, mad passions as they please, so that they rush headlong from bad to worse without restraint. *If such a one will sin, let him sin. If he will go to ruin, let him go. If he will be damned, let him be damned.* In proportion as this wretched state is caused by sin, it is the work of man; in so far as it is regarded as a punishment, it is God's doing.

O my God! Thou art terrible in Thy judgments,—secretly just and justly secret! Never allow me to arrive at such a state as this; therefore, now and forever, accept my entire will, my liberty, my power of election. Allow me not to live after my own fashion; for, undoubtedly, if I follow my concupiscences I shall run on in the dark worse than Judas did. Left to myself, I am like an unbroken wild beast which, without reflection, obeys its brutal appetites. If Thou lettest go the bridle on my neck, I shall obey all my wicked inclinations and run on in the way of destruction. Oh! curb me, I beseech Thee, by Thy law, by Thy faith. Bridle me in with the fear of Thy infinite justice and I shall live under eternal obligations to Thy infinite mercy.

The first sins of Judas were sins of thought. Therefore, I shall acquire the habit of resisting sins of thought, that thus I may have a greater abhorrence for sins of action. No one attains the summit of wickedness all at once, but by little and little.

IV. Judas, having left the Apostles, goes in search of the enemies of Jesus Christ—that is, of the rulers of the synagogue,—to concert with them and to put into execution the treachery decided upon. But before entering fully on the history of the deed, we should observe that in the narrative of the Evangelists it is repeatedly said that Judas was *one of the twelve*,<sup>1</sup> to accentuate this circumstance more clearly as an aggravation of his guilt. He might have been called one of the disciples, of whom there were seventy-two, who were followers of the Saviour, but not His confidants.

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt, xxvi, 14.

But he is called *one of the twelve*,<sup>1</sup> and with good reason, that it may be understood that he was one of the first chosen, as best among the better, who were distinguished and elevated to the most exalted dignity in the Church.

Judas was an Apostle. There is no doubt that by virtue of the Apostleship he must have had grace bestowed upon him to be a perfect Apostle,—that is, to save himself and others as well. Yet from being an Apostle he became an apostate. He was a prince in religion, and yet he was changed into a son of perdition. He was placed in the highest sphere among the saints; from which he fell into the lowest depths of wickedness, and became a devil.

Where can we find security against falling when Lucifer, created an angel, fell in heaven; when Adam, created innocent, fell in the earthly Paradise; and when Judas, chosen to the Apostleship, fell while numbered among the most familiar friends of Jesus Christ, God and Man? Assuredly, Thy judgments are great and unsearchable and profound, O my God, the just Judge! who weighest with a true balance mightily.

However, I must not dwell on these considerations so as to become disheartened and lose courage, but only with the intention of keeping myself humble and in fear, that I may never presume on my own strength, but may use all diligence and care to escape from the dangers that surround me. Considering that a man who enjoyed the society and confidence of the Son of God made Man, who heard His doctrine, witnessed His marvelous works, threw himself into so deep a gulf of wickedness;—how much more easily may I, who am weak and wretched beyond measure and who have not those privileges of grace, plunge suddenly into every manner of iniquity?

When I reflect that I can be sure of myself in no point; when I consider that although today I am a saint I might, tomorrow, be a reprobate worse than Judas, there being no sin too great which I may not be capable of committing; when, again, I think and remember seriously that I can not

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 14.

tell what is to become of me, either in time or in eternity; O my God! how can pride have dominion over me, how can it ever gain the least foothold in my heart—and yet it possesses me altogether. Let this truth, I implore Thee, be impressed on me, that I deceive myself whenever I imagine I am good for anything.

I shall also humble myself in comparison with my neighbor, and never look upon myself in any way preferable to others. Who knows whether that person whom I place in imagination below myself may not be saved? And who can tell whether I, who esteem myself above him, shall not be damned?

V. Judas enters the council of the rulers of the people and makes known to them his plot, at the very moment that they are discussing the question how they may apprehend Jesus Christ and put Him to death. We must especially remark that no one has solicited him, no one has entreated him or even proposed to him to act the part of traitor. No; he comes of his own free will to offer himself. Oh, the outrageous malignity of the impious wretch! No doubt he pretended to regard the miracles of Our Saviour as the effect of magic, and not to believe that He was God; and that he called Him Master as it were in sport, and ridiculed the Blessed Sacrament; and it is probable that, to cover the foulness of his treachery, he introduced himself by saying all manner of evil against Jesus Christ in order to make it appear a meritorious act to betray Him.

Oh, how all these vile rulers congratulate themselves on hearing the evil-tongued slanderer! They are delighted to think that Jesus Christ is now found out to be a bad man even by His own disciples, and has incurred their hatred. They conclude, from the enormities with which they hear Him charged by one of His Apostles, that He is really deserving of death. All of Judas's lies are believed, and all that he says from pure treachery and malice they accept as spoken through zeal for justice and from a sincere desire to satisfy his conscience. Who can comprehend the extreme dishonor inflicted on Jesus Christ by this



sacrilegious tongue! Who can conceive the acute pain, the bitter anguish that it caused Him, to be thus charged by one of His Apostles with imposture!

I represent to myself, O my sweet Redeemer, that it was on this occasion that Thou didst say with the Prophet: *If it were an enemy who speaks evil of me, I might have the heart to bear the injury. But that it should be one of those most dear to me, one of my intimate friends, one who has received untold favors from me; who, for three years, has been in my company, eating with me at my table!* This is an outrage beyond the possibility of endurance. Yet Thou dost bear it, good Jesus, with the utmost tranquillity and peace, and although Thou hast just cause for resentment, Thou, in Thy innocence, art not in the least perturbed nor afflicted by the calumnies of Judas.

This is a most striking example of humility and patience for me; but it will be of no advantage, since if any one utters two words against me, I, in my pride and impatience, must answer four to him. Often, it is true, I meet with humiliations; but for all that, I am not humble, because, while enduring a humiliation, I fret and am angry instead of humbling myself. Good God, I feel my pride continually gaining power over me; and I lose all confidence in myself to conquer it, because I see that when trials come I never succeed in vanquishing it. In Thee, therefore, I place my trust, and hope with Thy help to subdue it.

My resolution must be to bear with what is said against me by evil tongues, after the example of Jesus Christ; and to guard even against imitating Judas by speaking ill of others. This I must not do of any one, but especially of my superiors.

VI. Judas perceives that his proposals for the apprehension of Jesus Christ are eagerly accepted by the chief priests; and as his principal motive in betraying Him is avarice, he begins to bargain for the life of his divine Master. *What will you give me, he says, and I will deliver Him unto you?*<sup>1</sup> Thus speaks the traitor, leaving the affair

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 15.

to their discretion, as if he were deliberating about the sale of some good-for-nothing, useless article. What a dishonor is this to the Son of the Eternal Father, to the Saviour and Lord of the world, that He should be offered at a price that may appear suitable to His enemies, who are filled with savage hatred against Him.

The priests promise Judas that, when the work is done, they will give him thirty pieces of silver. However, of the smallest silver coin and of the basest metal. This was the lowest price for a slave,—the price already foretold by the Prophet as that for which the Messiah would be sold. Without demur, Judas agrees to it as though he had made an advantageous bargain; showing that if they had offered less he would have been satisfied with less. He closes with the offer, and immediately commences to think of the best way of executing his work. He valued the ointment with which Magdalene anointed Jesus Christ at more than three hundred pence. Now he values Christ Himself at less than thirty.

O blind, O foolish bargain! If he had gone to Magdalene or to the Blessed Virgin and put to them the question, *What will you give me, and I will sell you Jesus Christ?* knowing His inestimable value, what a price would they have set upon Him! And now, turning to ourselves—what is the price that we practically set on Jesus Christ? We think with horror of Judas because he betrayed Him for so little; and we think it a small thing to renew the betrayal of Our Lord as often as we commit sin. How true this is, my soul! As many times as thou hast sinned mortally, so often hast thou betrayed the Son of God made Man for thee and set a less price on Him than Judas did, valuing and loving some miserable gratification more than thy Master. O unhappy, O senseless, O dishonest bargain!

O God! Thou didst behold all the treachery by which I have dishonored Thy infinite Majesty when I reckoned this Thy Majesty of less consequence than the indulgence of some fit of pride or anger, or some sensual delight. Why didst Thou not crush so base, so perfidious a traitor? I

throw myself at Thy feet, to adore and thank Thy mercy; and for shame I dare not lift up my eyes. Now that I can do nothing more to indemnify myself for the evil done, I at least offer Thee my repentance and the resolution that I make of loving and esteeming Thee above all things. Enlighten my darkness, support my weakness, put a stop to my wickedness. I realize the mystery of that love by which Thou wert pleased to be valued at so cheap a rate while accomplishing our Redemption; it was that no one might have the excuse to say he could not purchase Thee. Ah! dear Jesus, if my love is a fair price at which to buy Thee, behold it. I love Thee too little; make me love Thee more.

I shall examine whether I really love God with a love of preference, making more account of His grace than of anything else in the world. Have I any attachment prejudicial to the love of God?

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### DISCOURSE OF JESUS CHRIST AFTER THE LAST SUPPER.

I. THE legal supper of the lamb and the Sacramental Supper of the Eucharist being concluded, Jesus Christ continues some time longer in conversation with His eleven Apostles at the table. Calling them by the loving name of children, He takes leave of them as a most affectionate father would who was about to depart to a distant land. In order to touch their hearts and produce on them a deeper impression of His last instructions, He gives them assurances of His love in language full of joy and consolation. He then exhorts them to constancy in the love of God, and the more strongly to draw them to it, He says: *As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love.*<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Christ here intends to address Himself not only to the Apostles but also to us; and we must reflect well on this truly marvelous condescension of the divine Goodness.

(1) St. John xv, 9.

And who am I, Lord, that Thou shouldst so especially and so powerfully call on me to love Thee? It would be an immense privilege if Thou only gavest me permission to love Thee, but that Thou shouldst encourage me, urge me, a poor insignificant creature, to love Thee, with such tender expressions of earnestness! What dost thou say, my soul? Thinkest thou, perchance, that when He commands thee to love Him it is because He has need of thee, or because it would be a loss to Him if thou didst not love Him?

You need not seek far for an answer to the question, Why does the Saviour command and encourage you to love Him? For no other reason than that He sees it is to your own advantage, and that on this love depends entirely your happiness in time and in eternity. He does not command us to love ourselves, because the love of God alone includes everything good that we can and ought to desire for ourselves. Oh, happy, blessed being that I am, if I love Jesus Christ! But oh, desperately miserable wretch, if at the moment of my death it appears that I have not loved Him! Oh! why am I not astounded to think that the Sovereign Good, supremely amiable in Himself, can, neither by benefits, nor entreaties, nor commands, nor promises, nor threats, prevail upon me to love Him?

Good God, how strange is my heart! Oh! let my folly and obduracy move Thee not to wrath, but to pity. I repent of having spent so many years of my life in the love of vanity, and not in the love of Thy divine Majesty. Ah! may I now at length begin to love Thee, and in such a manner that no other love but Thine may any longer have dominion over me. O Jesus! Thou didst come into the world to kindle Thy divine love in souls. Kindle it in my soul; banish far from it all inordinate love, so that I may love Thee, not for love of myself, but purely for Thy own sake, who art most worthy and deserving of love.

I shall make acts of love to Jesus Christ. Moreover, I resolve to be faithful in the practice of them, imploring the intercession of His most holy Mother, who is the Mother of fair love.



II. In order that no person may deceive himself on the subject of the love of God, which is indispensable for salvation, Jesus Christ gives us the proofs by which this love is manifested. These proofs, He says, are not in fine words, or fine thoughts, or tender feelings; but by the full, entire, and constant observance of His Commandments. *If you keep My commandments*, He says, *you shall abide in My love.*<sup>1</sup> It resides not in the memory, but in the heart, and produces integrity of life. He says not that the man loves Him who obeys Him in some things or at some times; but He speaks in general terms, and says that he loves Him who obeys Him, and that he who obeys Him not does not love Him. He presents Himself as an example, bringing forward His own perfect obedience as a proof of the love which He has for His Eternal Father.

Consequently, when I say that I love God I mean, if I speak the truth, that I am prepared to obey Him in everything and to lose all, even my life, rather than forfeit for a moment His grace by a mortal sin. To this I am obliged. But as in the love of creatures I have so frequently gratified my passions beyond the bounds due to them, without exactly calculating how far I was going, am I to stand on punctilios, and do nothing for the love of God but what I am bound to do under pain of mortal sin? Even heathens are obliged to do this; but we have a law that requires that we should ever advance more and more in the love of God. Therefore, my soul, is it well to say, *I will do nothing for the love of God but what I am obliged*, as though we were actually afraid of going beyond what the Commandments require?

O most loving Saviour! is this the way Thou hast dealt with me,—not to do more for me than what Thou wast obliged to do? Who or what, except Thy love, obliged Thee to undergo so painful a Passion for me, or by Thy death to obtain for me so plentiful a Redemption? How ungrateful would be my love if I were to calculate precisely to what point I could go in offending Thee without mortal sin, and

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xv, 10.



beyond this not to care whether or not I pleased Thee? Ah, my Lord! I know that Thou art a jealous God with respect to Thy love; and hitherto I have given no signs of love, except barren sentiments and inconstant desires. Grant that now I may indeed begin to love Thee. I do not know either in what manner or how much I love Thee. I can not even tell whether I love Thee in the degree that is necessary for my salvation. But now, do Thou, in the first place, give me a horror of sin, more for the love of Thee because it is an offence against Thee, than for my own interest and for fear of punishment. Moreover, grant that I may delight in everything that pleases Thee, and that everything that displeases Thee may also be disagreeable to me; and let me have such a love not only for Thy commandments, but also for Thy counsels, that I may no longer love anything that is not Thyself or that conducts not to Thee.

The safest rule for loving Jesus Christ is to strive to imitate Him. Therefore, I shall make it my object to imitate Him, considering at all times the will and glory of God in my actions and intentions.

III. The surest proof of our love for God is the love we have for our neighbor, as in no case can it be said that he loves God who does not love his neighbor. Consequently, in this His last sermon Jesus Christ repeatedly inculcates on us this love of our brethren, with most touching insistence, that He may be assured of our practising it, as in this point all is included. *A new commandment*, He says, *I give unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you.*<sup>1</sup> Now He calls it on account of the new manner in which He teaches us to love our neighbor; that is, in imitation of Himself, for the love of God, and for God, to distinguish it from ordinary love entertained for motives purely natural or worldly.

Jesus Christ says, moreover, in recommendation of fraternal charity, that the command that we should love one another is His command,—that is, it is properly and pecu-

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xiii, 34.

liarly His own; the principal, the one that interests Him the most, and which He most zealously desires us to observe. It is true that the other commandments are also His, but He has not spoken of any other, as He has of this, in terms so earnest and impressive; in order that we may understand the very great account that we must make of it, not so much in our judgment as in our will and practice.

I shall reflect on myself. Do I love my neighbor in the manner that I am commanded to love him, as Jesus Christ has loved us? Jesus Christ has loved all men without exception, having died for all and each. Now, conscientiously to speak the truth, do I love all men, good and bad, friends and enemies, grateful and ungrateful? If one person exists in the world whom I do not love, I have not the charity that is necessary for my salvation. Jesus Christ has loved us without respect to our merits, loving God in us and us for the sake of God, and wishing us that one only good—the grace and the glory of God. Do I love my neighbor thus, through supernatural motives for God's sake? If I do not love him in this way all my love is without merit.

O Thou great Lover and Legislator of love! O good Jesus! in this affair of the love of my neighbor I flatter and deceive myself. I persuade myself that I love him, but in reality I love him not as I know that I am obliged to love him. Oh! how willing am I, for any trifle, to exclude from my love first one person, then another; and oh! the love that I feel at one time for one, at another time for some one else, after all is nothing but the outcome of natural inclination and taste, or it is interested and worldly. I may acknowledge that up to the present time I have loved no one with truly Christian love, because if I have loved any one it has been with reference to self and not to God. Ah, most gracious God! have pity on me, and supernaturalize my heart so that I may love all men and in the manner that is pleasing to Thee.

The proper penance which I ought to perform for not having observed the precept of fraternal charity is that I should make a firm resolution to love my neighbor for the

time to come; loving all men, and doing that for the sole motive of the love of God.

IV. To animate us with greater zeal to the observance of His new commandment of fraternal charity, Jesus Christ goes on to declare the importance of it, saying: *By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.*<sup>1</sup> He does not say: If you give yourselves to prayer, to devotion, to the practice of austerities, or of so many other virtues; but, the characteristic that is to distinguish true from false Christians, the elect from the reprobate, He declares to be simply and solely fraternal charity,—wishing well one to another. He would say, Be you religious, be you spiritual, virgins, or whatever else you please, if you have not charity one toward another you shall be none of Mine.

Thus, in fact, will it be at the end of the world, on the day of the General Judgment. Fraternal charity will be the one only sign by which true Christians will be known, by which the elect shall be distinguished from the reprobate. The eternal Judge will not say, Come, ye blessed, because you have astonished the world by your miracles; but, Come ye blessed, because you have loved one another for the love of Me; Go, ye cursed, because you did not love each other. Now, then, if I look into myself, to judge the state of my own soul, what practical esteem have I for the virtue of brotherly love? Frequently I scruple things that are of little or no consequence; but of charity, which is the essence of the Christian life, I make small account.

O merciful Jesus! my wickedness is known to Thee; but, for my own confusion, I accuse myself of it. I have cherished hatred for many persons; in my anger I have devised schemes of revenge; if I have not had it in my power to act otherwise, I have revenged myself by speaking ill of them. I have actually despised and trodden under foot Thy holy commandment. My pride and inordinate self-love have been the cause of this. Even to this day how easily do I resent, with anger and ill-will, any slight an-

(1) St. John xiii, 35.

noyance I meet with. If any one offends me in some especially tender point I no longer feel toward him the good-will with which I previously regarded him; and I think it of more importance to indulge an angry, proud feeling, than to obey that command of Thine which is the nearest to Thy Heart, of which Thou art most jealous. How then can I expect to be saved? I am undeserving of mercy, O my God! still I hope for it from Thee, and I hope also for the grace to amend. Give me a new heart and a new spirit, as Thou hast promised me. Pour into my heart that fulness of charity that overflows Thy breast, that I may observe, with perfection, this Thy beloved command of fraternal love.

I shall love my neighbor as I ought to love myself, in a Christian way, desiring and praying that every one may love God as perfectly as I desire and pray that I myself may love Him. This is the true love of charity.

V. The love of God and the love of our neighbor, to which we are bound, surpass the utmost powers of nature. Wherefore, in order that nothing may be wanting to enable us to fulfil our duty, Jesus Christ proposes a most efficacious means to us, which is prayer; assuring us that all things that we shall ask of His heavenly Father He will give us, particularly whatever regards our eternal salvation. What is easier to a poor beggar than to ask alms? In like manner, what is easier for me than to ask God, as a beggar, for all that I need? I shall never have a right to complain of God for not giving me such and such graces, which were necessary for me at certain times, and in certain places; the fault is mine, I did not ask for them.

Besides, Jesus Christ teaches us how this prayer should be made, and lays down the rule that our prayers to God must always be accompanied with humility and confidence. Humility consists in the knowledge of our own misery and nothingness, and of our being of ourselves good-for-nothing. Confidence is a steadfast belief that God is able and willing to give us every good, as He has promised, in His mercy, to give it to us whenever we ask Him. This is the



definition of humility and confidence. It is to have of myself the meanest and most abject opinion possible, and of God the highest and most exalted. Learn, my soul, thus to pray to God, and doubt not that thou wilt be heard.

Oh, consoling doctrine! Is there a prince in the world who says to the poor, If you ask me for riches, I will make you rich immediately? Is there a physician who says, or who can say to the sick, If you ask me to give you health, I will at once make you well? Is there a teacher who says, or who can say to the ignorant, If you ask me for knowledge, I will make you learned in a moment? This is how my infinitely good and almighty God deals with me in regard to my spiritual necessities. If thou wilt ask Me for charity, I will make thee charitable, etc. And how can I entertain desponding doubts of His granting me the virtues of which I stand in need for my eternal salvation? It is true that of myself I am poor, weak, and ignorant in the extreme; but the sole reason is, that I do not ask, since I know that the word of God can not fail and that I shall receive everything that I ask in so far as it is good and right.

Ah, blessed be Thy infinite goodness, O my God! I throw myself at Thy feet in confusion, as I know not what to ask of Thee; since I am in want of everything, I confess to Thee my poverty and leave myself unreservedly in Thy hands. If, however, through obedience I must now ask Thee for something, this is what I ask,—the grace to pray, and to pray as I ought; because I am aware that I am very languid in my prayers, and frequently disposed to neglect them.

I shall no longer neglect prayer, which may be made so easily, in every place, and at any time, with the heart. When I pray I shall remember to fix the eye of my mind, first on my own misery, then on God's mercy.

VI. Jesus Christ, beholding the Apostles overwhelmed with fear and sadness because He was about to leave this world, charitably endeavors to comfort them. He promises them that, although He must depart, He will, nevertheless, not abandon them, and assures them that all is for the best.



Then He forewarns them that they will have to suffer persecutions, woes, and sorrows. At the same time He inspires them with sentiments of generous fortitude, putting Himself before them as an example how to suffer hatred and persecution, and animating them with the hope of eternal beatitude.

I shall reflect on these two motives of encouragement. What could be more encouraging and consoling for me, also? The servant is not above the Master. If Jesus Christ, who is my head, has patiently endured insults, mockery, scourges, and even death upon an infamous gibbet, how can I refuse patiently to suffer my trials; I who, as a Christian, glory in calling myself one of His members? However bitter the humiliations, the misfortunes, the afflictions of this world may be, take one glance only, my soul, at Jesus, and oh, how sweet and charming will it become for thee to bear them! What a consolation will it be to thee in suffering to remember that thou hast been thought worthy to be like Him!

Again, if I consider that every trouble here below comes quickly to an end, and that as a recompense for bearing it for the love of God will be given me the enjoyment of a glory in Paradise, that will last throughout the eternal ages of the life of God Himself, what pain is there, or what penance which I can allow myself to count too severe? Consider, my soul, what is that Paradise that is won by patience, and in comparison with that incomprehensible felicity and bliss, thou shalt soon learn to reckon all suffering as of no account. Although our life were to last thousands of years in continual mortifications and humiliations, there would yet be no proportion between the merit thus gained and that glory which is immense, eternal, infinite. What, then, must we say when we reflect how short is our life, how transitory are all our pains? Ah! where is the cross, whether interior or exterior, which can appear heavy to me with the cheering thought before my eyes that Paradise awaits me, and that after suffering for a little while everlasting joy will follow?

O my Lord God! how liberal art Thou, to promise me the reward of a glorious eternity for renouncing my own will and practising patience and humility for the few days of this miserable life! Imprint deeply, I beseech Thee; on my soul this truth of Thy Gospel. Confirm this confidence in my heart and help me to live in conformity with what I believe and hope, so that, by Thy grace, I may admire Thy omnipotence, thank Thy mercy, and enjoy Thy unspeakable glory throughout the endless ages of eternity.

My hope of eternal salvation having no foundation but the merits of Jesus Christ, with the proviso that I should imitate Him, I shall keep before my eyes the necessity of this imitation, especially when I meditate on His sacred Passion.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### JESUS CHRIST GOES WITH HIS APOSTLES TO THE GARDEN.

I. THE hour being now arrived for the practice of that unrivaled obedience with which Jesus Christ is about to glorify His Eternal Father, He rises from table, and in a manner of entreaty says to the Apostles, *Arise, let us go hence.*<sup>1</sup> However, He continues His discourse, and having lifted up His eyes to Heaven and made a sublime prayer, He goes forth from the supper room and takes the road to the Garden of Gethsemani. At the same time, the hearts of the poor Apostles sink within them for fear that they may now be separated from Him; and they gather around Him as He goes, like chickens around a hen, with holy eagerness to hear Him. Oh! with what devotion and attention they listen to catch the words that escape from Him, as words of eternal life.

Jesus Christ perceiving them so fervent, foretells to them what will happen that very night; He warns them that the devil will tempt them and sift them as corn is sifted in a sieve, striving to make their faith waver, in the

(1) St. John xiv, 31.

following manner: How can He be God and the Saviour of the world who can not save Himself? Their divine Master tells them this that they may be humble, and not trust to their own feelings of fervor. Human nature is frail and weak,—and especially is this true with regard to the mysteries of faith: man's reason easily yields if not supported by an especial grace from God.

Here is also a lesson for me. Certain lights, which at times arise in my mind, and ardent sentiments of my heart, cause me to fancy that I should have fortitude to undergo martyrdom rather than deny the Faith. But how often is my weakness manifested by palpable proofs. At the approach of temptation I am immediately disconcerted, and within a hair's-breadth of yielding. I must be on my guard with respect to temptations against the Faith. I repeat, I must fear these temptations in particular, since, to repel them, my own strength must be considered as of no account. It is true that the devil can not tempt without permission from God, but if He sometimes allows temptations as a trial of virtue, how often, at the same time, does He permit them purely and simply as a punishment of pride.

O my God! what would become of me if Thou didst suffer me to lose my faith? Although I have lost so many other virtues, yet if faith still remains all the rest may be recovered by means of it. If faith is once lost, I have no other virtue that can help me. I deserve that Thou shouldst punish me by allowing me to lose the faith which, by Thy mercy, was infused into my soul in Baptism, and it is principally on account of my pride that I deserve it; this being a vice which in a special way is opposed to faith. Thou hast said this in Thy holy Gospel, and true it is that faith can not be exercised except by the humble. Without humility my fervor is a pure illusion. Without humility I shall yield to all temptations. Therefore, O most loving Saviour, give me that humility of which Thou didst remark the absence in Thy Apostles; and of which Thou seest that I am far more in need than they were.

It is probable that at the hour of my death the devil will tempt me against faith. Who knows what shall become of me in that terrible conflict? This thought is of paramount importance to keep me humble.

II. When the Apostles heard Jesus Christ foretell the temptation that was soon to assail them, they should have conceived a great fear of their own weakness and with humility have implored the divine assistance. But, without any reflection whatever, we behold them all answering, and none with such impetuosity as St. Peter, that all of them will voluntarily suffer imprisonment and tortures with Him, and even loss of life, but never shall they be so weak as to be afraid to profess their faith.

Thus they speak, and particularly St. Peter, who with a bold, intrepid voice raised above the others, feels himself inwardly moved by a bright light of faith and a transport of love. But he does not add that he looks for strength to maintain his faith to the grace of God; and in his devotion there appears a certain character of presumption, as he promises of himself a thing that is far beyond his power. Besides, he boasts that even if the others should waver in their faith he never will. Wherefore, from this self-confidence of St. Peter, Jesus Christ takes occasion to foretell to him that he shall deny Him three times that very night. Thereby He teaches us all that we must promise ourselves nothing from the extraordinary fervor we may at any time experience, nor from any immutable resolution that we may seem to have made, unless the grace of God mercifully intervenes in our behalf.

Oh, prodigious mystery of the wisdom and goodness of God, who permits that the stoutest pillars of His Church should be shaken to give to us a lesson of humility! Who or what am I, O my Lord! that in my Confessions I should promise never more to offend Thee, and in prayer should undertake faithfully to attain perfection? I am as a little bird that would fly without wings. I am far, far more weak and wretched than was St. Peter, when he, without reckoning on Thy help, promised to give his life for Thee.



Grant, then, I beseech Thee, that at all times I may distrust my own will, my own desires, my resolutions, and that I may trust in Thy grace alone, humbly imploring Thee to give it to me.

I have had countless occasions to know, by experience, that when I fancy myself rich, then I am most poor; that when I conceive that I am strong, wise, prudent, then it is that I prove weak, blind, and foolish; that when I think I have the most courage to support temptations, then I am the most inclined, like a coward, to yield to them. O my God! I confess my wretchedness, my nothingness; and I ask of Thee grace to assist me at all times; and may that light never forsake me which, at this moment, by Thy mercy, enables me to realize that I am good-for-nothing.

I shall accustom myself carefully to watch over my interior actions, so that I may remember whether I have occasion to avoid some evil or to do something good. I must call upon God, trust in God, and acknowledge that every good comes from God.

III. Jesus Christ was wont, after laboring all day for the salvation of souls, to retire by night to pray in a garden near Mount Olivet. This devout custom He adheres to even up to the time of His last night on earth. He goes to the identical place in which He knows that Judas will shortly be coming, with an armed force, to seize Him, giving His disciples to understand that His apprehension will be voluntary, not coerced, nor unexpected. In a garden—that is, in the earthly Paradise—Adam sinned, and brought ruin on the whole world; in a garden, likewise, namely, that of Gethsemani, the Saviour enters upon His Passion and works out the salvation of the world.

He enters the garden, to which nothing but His most ardent charity leads and invites Him. He foresees that in a few hours He will return by the same route in chains, dragged forward by His enemies. This does not in the slightest degree disturb His equanimity. On the contrary, He goes with striking intrepidity to wait for them. As usual, He takes with him His Apostles, with whom He



converses pleasantly, as if there was no grievous trouble awaiting Him; thereby teaching them and us not to omit the practice of prayer, and especially in times of adversity to find in it rest for our mind.

Oh, how just and reasonable, my good Jesus, is Thy example! I do not allow a day to pass without nourishing my body. If I can not partake of food at one time, I do so at another. How much more should I act in this manner with regard to my soul and feed it daily with holy prayer! Yet, how readily do I neglect prayer for any trifling business that may come in my way! I manage to find time for idle talk, for vain and useless pursuits, to gratify my curiosity or my taste; but for prayer I can find no leisure; for prayer I have neither ability, nor resolution, nor inclination. Here is the root of the evil, O my God! Consequently, I am weak and frail when I meet with temptations and occasions of sin. Hence it is that I am a slave to my passions, because I do not value prayer; and I permit myself to neglect it sometimes from indolence; again on account of having my mind distracted by some vain or foolish object.

O Thou! who now givest me light to realize the necessity of prayer, give me also, I beseech Thee, the spirit of prayer, that I may pray in a manner pleasing to Thee and profitable to myself. Let no day pass in which I do not cast myself at Thy feet to reflect on the affair of my salvation. Let no day pass in which I do not recommend myself to Thy care, in which I do not humble myself in Thy presence, in order to obtain help through the merits of Thy Passion. Thou hast commanded me to pray, therefore, from Thee, I hope for grace to obey this Thy commandment.

When prevented by insuperable obstacles from making my customary prayer I shall be displeased, and I shall make it at least in desire and by frequent aspirations to my last end,—that is, to God.

## CHAPTER XV.

## PHYSICAL SADNESS OF JESUS CHRIST IN GETHSEMANI.

I. No sooner has Jesus Christ entered the garden than He is instantly overwhelmed with fear, sorrow, sadness, and depression. Before His enemies come to torment Him in His body, He of Himself puts His soul into an agony to a degree so violent that it could not possibly have been produced or endured except by one who, like Him, was true God and true Man. The Son of God, in becoming Man, was pleased to subject Himself to the natural weaknesses of man; and now He allows His human nature to endure the utmost suffering to which man is subject, in the way of fear, melancholy, confusion, anxiety, and anguish. A divine Person, condescending thus to bear the most humiliating infirmities of man that He may exalt man to a participation in the high prerogatives of God,—but who can express in words this strange, unheard-of passion?

My soul, behold thy Lord, pale, languid, trembling, distressed; a prey to such intense grief that He no longer knows what to do with Himself. Now He throws Himself face downward on the earth; now He raises His arms to heaven; now He takes a few steps forward in the darkness of the night, pants, sighs, and groans. In this deep anxiety, with this load on His breast which almost deprives Him of breath, He would fain give vent to the bitterness of His soul; but, instead, it is more confined and concentrated within Him and seems to burst and break His Heart.

Now are the predictions of the Prophets accomplished in the soul of Our Saviour, which had been represented to them as in the depths of the sea, tossed and convulsed in the midst of tumultuous passions, filled with horror, dread and woe. He becomes sad, that He may merit gladness for us; He is overwhelmed with affliction, that we may be consoled;—and where is the compassion that we have for Him in this His bitter anguish? Oh! let us ponder well His interior grief which overflows, as it were, from within, and changes His outward appearance.

Ah, most sweet Saviour! how is it that I see Thy glorious soul subject to fear, sadness, and dread? How is it that Thou art now in fear who, a while ago, wert encouraging the Apostles; Thou Thyself now oppressed with sadness, who art the delight and the joy of the angels; now filled with dread, though Thou didst so earnestly long for this hour? I know Thou dost take upon Thyself these atrocious pains; but is not that already too much which Thou seest Thou hast to suffer in Thy body? Why overwhelm Thy soul with the load of so many crosses by anticipation? O goodness! O charity! When Thou dost suffer for me, nothing appears too much to Thee. Thou wouldst give me to understand how much Thou lovest me that I, in return, may love Thee, be grateful to Thee and sympathize with Thee; but how shall I be able to sympathize with Thy interior pains if I do not understand them? Do Thou enlighten my understanding, which is so weak; give strength to the desires that I have to follow Thee and imitate Thee with tender affections of love in all Thy sorrowful mysteries.

I shall endeavor to make good use of my passions and turn them to account for my eternal salvation; as Jesus Christ employs His passions in suffering for me, I shall strive to mortify mine for the love of Him.

II. In order that we may obtain a faint conception of the interior passion of Jesus Christ, let us represent to ourselves, in the first place, the divine Will in His regard presiding over and commanding the superior part of His soul. Then, His human will or reason in everything subject and conformed to the divine Will. Lastly, in the inferior part of His soul, the sensitive will or appetite, which abhors suffering and death; which fears them, has an acute perception of them and would, as far as possible, avoid them. It is true that in Jesus Christ the sensitive powers were perfectly submissive to the spirit; yet they were subject to the weakness of human nature and capable of being oppressed with fear, trouble, sadness, as the divine Will might permit. In this, therefore, consisted the passion of Jesus

Christ in the garden; namely, in the endurance of all those interior fears, sadnesses, and tribulations to which the nature of man is liable; the Divinity permitting that this should happen, in order to increase the burden of His Passion, and at the same time the plenitude of our Redemption.

Jesus Christ is aware that His Passion and death have been determined in the decrees of God; and the time for the execution of these decrees being come, they are announced to Him in the garden to the end that His human, physical nature may submit to them. He beholds the Eternal Father incensed at the sins of the world, commanding the sword of His avenging justice to be unsheathed against Him; and as He sees that the time has now come for the blow to be struck, His poor nature, which is left to act by its own power and according to its own bent as simple nature, is dismayed and distressed to such a degree as to testify its mortal sadness by the pallor and sweat that are wont to accompany death.

He had it in His power to be free from sorrow (were it not for His desire to suffer and to die). But He was pleased to suffer for us all that our nature is capable of suffering; and moreover, while He was able to conceal His interior passion, He was pleased that it should be manifested by outward signs and that the Evangelists should relate it for our edification. Behold, then, thy Saviour, O my soul! Dost thou see how He languishes with fainting and oppression! What are thy sentiments at this sight?

O Jesus! the most amiable of men, I thank Thee for this Thy painful sadness, by the endurance of which Thou didst merit for me eternal gladness. Oh, how great is the love Thou hast for me! Oh! grant that I may never forget the sufferings of Thy soul, which are so many favors bestowed by Thy mercy upon my soul. Thou didst make use of Thy passions to suffer and merit and satisfy for me, because I have used my passions to sin. Therefore, what thanks do I owe Thee! O most loving Saviour! I desire to love Thee, and to love Thee more and more. But in order that I may



do this Thou must correct the disorder into which my soul has been thrown by the rebellion of my sensitive appetite against reason, and by the rebellion of my reason against Thy divine will.

When I experience repugnance to the practice of virtue, I shall recollect that virtue is, nevertheless, still virtue, and is even more meritorious, when, in imitation of Jesus Christ, the opposition of nature to its exercise is overcome by the spirit.

III. Rightly to understand the Passion of Jesus Christ in the garden, it is important that we be persuaded of the truth,—that it was not anything sudden and unforeseen that so greatly terrified and afflicted Him. It was not with Him as it is with ourselves, who, when troubles come upon us, can not help lamenting and being afflicted, because our human nature is too weak to resist. To the Man-God nothing could happen contrary to His will. If He fears and grieves and is depressed with sorrow to the point of falling into a mortal agony, all this, we must say with the Prophet, is because of His own free choice, He wills it thus.

Jesus Christ has passions appertaining to His nature, but none of them can act except by His own supernatural power, so that in Him every inward movement of sadness, of repugnance, or fear is voluntary. As He became Man in the way and under the circumstances that He made choice of, so He suffers the miseries and infirmities of human nature when and in what degree He pleases. As the sufferings of His body are spontaneous, no less spontaneous must be those of His soul.

Whence I shall draw this reflection: Although it were true that Jesus Christ suffered through necessity, even then as by His exalted, sublime intentions He could have made a virtue of necessity, I should have been strictly bound to give Him thanks for so heroic an offering of Himself for me to His Eternal Father. What thanks, then, do I not owe Him, since, in His case, there was no necessity of any kind, and He underwent all that He did suffer by a spontaneous act of His own loving, merciful will,



O good Jesus, how much do I owe Thee for that spiritual bitterness with which Thou didst fill Thy soul, to obtain for my soul spiritual sweetness! How much do I owe Thee for those fears and tremblings that Thou didst produce in Thyself in order that my pusillanimous spirit might be made stable and resolute in virtue! When some trouble comes upon me I begin to think on all the motives I can find to be comforted, so as to lighten my pain and suffer as little as possible. With marvelous ingenuity Thou didst employ Thy thoughts to discover whatever might aggravate Thy sorrow, and for no other reason than to give me new evidences of Thy love, so much the more indubitable as they are stranger and more unexampled. O divine Mediator, who placest Thyself in trouble and fear to tranquillize our fears and strengthen us in the hope of our eternal salvation, grant, oh, grant that Thy charity may be corresponded with by me! I wish to love Thee, but my heart is poor in the extreme. I ask Thee, then, for the grace of Thy love, through the merits of Thy soul, which suffered such affliction and tribulation in the garden.

After the example of Jesus Christ, who suffers of His own choice and accumulates sufferings on Himself for love of me, I shall resolve to practise frequent voluntary sufferings similar to those that come upon me by necessity.

IV. In order to cause Himself the utmost affliction possible, Jesus Christ excites within Himself all the sad thoughts that might distress and grieve Him the most. By an act of perfect virtue, He brings before His imagination the entire course of His ignominious and painful Passion, taking a view—not in general, but distinctly and in their minutest detail—of all the dishonors and pains that in a short time He will be obliged to undergo.

In the garden He sees all the insults and affronts that He will have to bear. He sees the buffets He will receive on His face, all the blows with which His body will be bruised, all the thorns that will pierce His head. He sees the number of the wounds with which His flesh will be laid bare; the quantity of blood that will be shed from His veins; the

excess of interior pain that He will feel; and the nature of the death that awaits Him. All these sorrowful objects He presents to His most tender Heart, and impresses them upon It with so lively a force that He suffers in It all at once the pains that He will have to endure in His body one by one, thus at every moment sacrificing and offering Himself for us unreservedly.

Reflect, my soul, that Jesus Christ was in the highest possible degree susceptible of quick and sensitive emotions, because His human nature was most perfect in all its powers and organs. On this account there is no doubt that His sorrow was, in the utmost degree, acute. Let us form an idea of a combination at one and the same time of all the most horrible imaginations with which men can be shocked and terrified. This would bear no proportion to the afflicted apprehensions of Jesus Christ at this time, as these were incomparably more severe. For every individual pain, whether suffered in His body or suffered in His soul, He invites us, by the voice of the Prophet, to contemplate as in the highest degree incomparable.

O most holy Redeemer, how rigorous art Thou toward Thyself in order that Thou mayest be merciful toward me! I adore the infinite wisdom manifested in Thy mercy. The reason that prompts Thee to endure so frightful a passion in the physical faculties of Thy heart is, because the source whence all my sins originate is no other than the will of the flesh and the concupiscence of the heart. The reason Thou didst make a cross for Thyself of Thy passions is, because it is precisely in the disorder of my passions that my wrong-doing lies. The reason why Thou didst excite fear in Thyself was, that Thou mightest give me a fearless confidence in Thy merits. Ah, my Jesus! make me then reap the fruit of these Thy merits. Cleanse my heart from all sin; renew it by giving me a true spirit of penance, with which I may always grieve and be afflicted for all those sins of mine that have been the occasion of Thy bitter afflictions. This was Thy intention; therefore, it is the fruit to be gained by me.

From the interior passion of Jesus Christ I will learn that it is the interior man that must be reformed in me. Consequently, I shall be attentive to this reformation, beginning with the ruling of that passion within me which is the most predominant.

V. The violent passion which, above all, torments the soul of Jesus Christ with regard to its sensitive faculties, in the garden, is the fear of death,—a violent, imminent, inevitable death, which He apprehends in the most lively manner as an evil the most grievous imaginable in the order of nature, by which His precious life is to be destroyed. It is true that His ignominious death is to be succeeded by a glorious Resurrection, but the sensitive appetite which is instinctively ruled by one desire of the preservation of this present life looks not beyond it. It is this appetite that abhors death; that, from fear of it, is moved to restless tremors and contortions; that grieves, resists, and would rather not die. But as it is divinely decreed that death can not be escaped, and reason submits to this decree, the result is that a conflict arises between reason which obeys, and sense which resists; poor, weak, human nature, tossed and distracted by this afflicting, oppressive fear of death, suffers what are called the agonies of death.

But let us consider the wise providence of God, permitting in this manner the sensitive appetite to make this opposition in order that, in proportion to the violence of its reluctance, the obedience of Our Saviour might have the greater virtue and be more meritorious as a satisfaction for Adam's disobedience. It is thus permitted that the Heart of Jesus Christ, in obeying the divine Will, should be agitated with the most painful opposition of the flesh and of sense, since it is precisely from the sensual appetite that all the sins of the world had their beginning.

O my Jesus, my God! what golden lessons dost Thou give me in the garden how to obey Thy holy commandments, in spite of my passions and of the wearisome repugnance of my nature. Oh, how happy should I be if but in this point alone I was truly resolved to imitate Thee! I am grieved

for the innumerable acts of disobedience to Thy divine Majesty of which I have been guilty by not resisting the movements of my senses. For the future I promise to do violence to myself and to obey Thee. But as there is in me so strong an opposition to virtue and my spirit is so weak, and since I have nothing in which to trust but Thy merits and Thy help, behold, I here offer Thee my wretched heart, which of itself can effect nothing against such a host of wicked passions as I find within myself. Vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, to fortify it with Thy holy grace so that I may be faithful to my resolution of obeying the divine Will, leaving nature to suffer what it may.

In the Heart of Jesus I find the school of my eternal salvation. Herein consists the essence of Christian perfection; namely, invariably to prefer the divine Will to the will of the flesh and of the senses.

VI. Jesus Christ fears death as a man, thus giving evidence of His being really Man. And since in His own person He is the representative of every man individually, He has been pleased to leave us, in this fear, a most important instruction. In order to gather fruit from it let us reflect and reason upon it. If Jesus Christ is overwhelmed with distress from a natural fear of the separation which takes place, by death, of His soul from the body, what fear should not the thought of death create in me, viewing it, as I must, in the light of faith.

Jesus Christ had nothing to fear at the tribunal of God, because He is the King of innocence, innocence itself; and there is no one who can convict Him of sin, the devil having found in Him not the shadow of a fault. Justly I have every reason to fear. This thought should maintain my heart, day and night, in fear: that I have to die, and after death to appear for judgment loaded with the guilt of numberless iniquities. Yet the thought of death does not disturb me, and the fear of death produces in me no compunction. I live as if I were never to die, or as if nothing were to take place after death in regard to me. I fear death as animals do—through natural instinct. I fear it as

Turks also do—from the attachment I have to this wretched earth. But I do not fear it on account of what faith teaches in respect to it, as every good Christian, if he would lead an exemplary life, should fear it.

Grant, O Lord, my God! I beseech Thee, that I may never lose sight of the moment of my death; of that moment which is to fix my doom for a blessed or a miserable eternity; of that moment after which no more moments will be given me for doing penance, and concerning which Thou hast warned me to be watchful because it will come unawares. Pierce me through with Thy holy fear, O my God! with fear of eternity, in which I am uncertain of my state; with fear of Thy judgment, which will be rigorous on me; with fear of my sins, the number of which daily increases. If even he, whoever he be, who is conscious of no sin must tremble and cry for mercy before the throne of Thy justice, what shall become of me with a conscience that accuses me of sins past reckoning? O my Jesus, Thou who wilt be my Judge, give me, through Thy merits, Thy true spirit, by which I may accustom myself to die to the concupiscences of the flesh and of the world, and live no longer except to love Thee and to imitate and enjoy Thee for all eternity.

At the moment of death I shall be judged for many things of which I now make no scruple. I have reason to fear on account of my lax conscience, which seems afraid of nothing but some especially enormous sins.

VII. From the first moment of His life to the last, the interior passion of Jesus Christ was incessant, because the constant apprehension of what He had to suffer exteriorly kept Him always in bitter and excruciating anxiety. All His previous sadness, as it was mingled with spiritual joy which caused Him often to speak of His death with longing and satisfaction, could hardly be called sadness when compared with what He underwent in the garden.

What He then suffered in His most holy soul was extreme, because it was pure, unmitigated suffering, without relief or consolation: for Jesus Christ, now confining to



His spirit all the glory of His Godhead, and not imparting the slightest portion to His sensitive faculties, while He continues in a supreme degree happy in the paradise which the superior faculties of His soul enjoy, is at the same time, profoundly afflicted in His inferior faculties, which He, as it were, buries in a chaos of obscurity, dryness, sorrow, and depression. His human nature rejoices and suffers at the same time; and as, on the one hand, its joy is nowise rendered less perfect by the suffering, so its suffering receives not the least diminution from the joy.

All this is true, because He Himself thus freely chooses and ordains it. In the same way as God, in the Creation, divided the waters which were above the firmament from those that were below it, those above being calm and tranquil, while those below were liable to be tossed by winds; so, in the Redemption, the waters of divine consolation which, in the person of Jesus Christ, filled the superior faculties of His soul, were divided from the waters of tribulation that inundated the inferior. Ways and means of consolation were not wanting to the Man-God. But He rejects all that might alleviate His Passion, and accepts whatever may aggravate it. And why is this? It is to merit Paradise for me, where happiness is pure without alloy of pain, and to save me from hell, where pain is pure without admixture of happiness; also to animate me to imitate Him in this vale of tears, in which pleasures and pains are commingled.

O good Jesus! how different is my interior state from Thine. My thoughts and desires aim only at avoiding troubles and suffering and procuring for myself comforts, indulgences, and amusements. Instil into me, I beseech Thee, sentiments worthy of a soul created for eternity and bound by so many obligations and motives to imitate Thee. Meanwhile I thank Thee for Thy love, and offer Thee the bitter sorrows of Thy Heart in atonement for the sins that I have committed in pursuit of pleasure.

I shall resolve to imitate Jesus Christ by depriving my-

self of some lawful gratification, and by suffering patiently, without complaint, any inconveniences appertaining to my state of life.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### MENTAL SADNESS OF JESUS CHRIST IN GETHSEMANI.

I. JESUS CHRIST was pleased to suffer, not only in every part of His body, but in every part of His soul as well. Not alone in the sensitive inferior part, but moreover in the superior part in which the understanding resides. Although in His mind the vision of God made Him happy, nevertheless He discovered miraculous ways of uniting in His mind, together with the supreme joy of His glory, intense sorrow, arising from reflection on all the sins of the world and abhorrence of them. True it is that throughout His life He had at all times a clear knowledge of them. However, now in the garden He meditates on their enormity with more intense application of mind.

Jesus Christ having in His Incarnation taken the form, not of one man, but of all men, it is here, in the garden, that He practically and really plunges into the miseries of all. He represents to Himself all the sins of the world that have been committed since the time of Adam, and that shall be committed until the Day of Judgment. He beholds them with His mind's eye, not confusedly, as we may do, but with perfect distinctness as to number, kind, and circumstance, and with all their degrees of malice, precisely as if each sinner was there in the garden committing them before His face. What horrible, tormenting thoughts to a Man-God! Now may He complain, with the Prophet, that the torrents of iniquity have encompassed Him; and well may we condole and complain that the bitterness of His immense sorrow is like a fathomless sea into which all the rivers of woe are poured.

Here let me reflect upon myself, and not lose sight of self while tracing out the sins of others. Jesus has present

to Him, in the most perfect manner, all my sins of thought, word, and action. All, as many as I have committed from my first coming to the use of reason, by day or by night, alone or in company with others. They are all before His eyes, such as they are, in number, in quality, in all their monstrous hideousness. Moreover, as He realizes that I have no penitential sorrow for them myself, He gives Himself up at this black, frightful prospect, to mortal sadness.

Oh, what a great evil must sin be, since the mere representation of it, O my Jesus! is sufficient to make Thy spirit thus sad and disconsolate, which at the same time is in the enjoyment of the exceeding bliss of glory. I am grieved for having thus embittered the sweetness of Thy interior joy by my sins. Oh, would that I could afford Thee some refreshment in Thy anguish! But yes, with one of those helps that Thou hast purchased for me I can do it, and for this help I ask Thee, through Thy merits, graciously to give me. Communicate to my heart a portion of that sadness which my sins have brought upon Thee and I am confident that as, while in the state of sin, I have afflicted Thee, so I shall please and console Thee when I shall be truly penitent.

I shall excite myself to sorrow for my sins. I shall implore the Lord to give me an abhorrence of mortal sin so that I may fear all danger of it, avoid all its occasions, and, as far as possible, fly its very shadow.

II. Jesus Christ, in the garden, sees all the sins of the world, past, present, and future. He beholds them not by a mere human, superficial understanding of them, but with a clearness of knowledge immense and incomprehensible, such as all men and angels united have not and can not have; thoroughly penetrating the depths of their malignity and hatefulness. As in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, as in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, He knows perfectly what mortal sin is; and between the manner of His knowing it and of ours there is an incalculable difference. We also know that mortal sin is a grievous offence against God; but as God is

known to us only in a dark manner by faith, so the knowledge which we have of sin is likewise dark.

Jesus Christ, with His mind, sees and knows thoroughly the infinite goodness and majesty of God. Hence, He also knows thoroughly the infinite malice and heinousness of every mortal sin which is a direct injury to the infinite greatness of God, and it is this knowledge that occasions Him a load of sorrow and consternation which it is impossible for us to express or to comprehend.

Let me reflect: If the devil were visibly to appear to me, in all his frightful hideousness, without doubt I should tremble, I should sweat, I should faint with fear. But what comparison is there between all the devils of hell put together and the inconceivably terrible deformity of one mortal sin? What, then, was the state of Jesus Christ when so many millions of millions of most hateful sins were before His eyes at one moment? He knew perfectly the exceedingly abominable wickedness of each. If He was afflicted beyond measure at the thought of the cross, which is the medicine of the evil, what must have been His affliction at the sight of so many of the evils themselves!

O most holy soul of Jesus! even if my eyes were two fountains of tears, could I worthily compassionate Thee? I must indemnify myself for my little compassion by admiration. Thou, who hadst me present to Thee in the garden, who didst see in my conscience innumerable sins, how couldst Thou endure me? Still more, how couldst Thou love me, beholding me full of disgusting deformities? O infinite mercy! But how does it happen, that while Thou art so afflicted at the sight of my sins I should be so insensible to them? I know not what sin is; I know well enough that I ought not to commit it; but I desire to have such a knowledge of it as may move me to sorrow. I beseech Thee make me know and feel the grievousness of the evil; since I shall never be able heartily to say, *miserere mei, Deus*, have mercy on me, O God, if I can not also add: *iniquitatem meam ego cognosco*,<sup>1</sup> I know my iniquity.

(<sup>1</sup>) Psalm 1, 4.



The Passion of Jesus Christ can in the best manner give me light to know sin and motives for detesting it. Therefore, I shall meditate upon it devoutly every day, as nothing can be more profitable for me.

III. Jesus Christ is sad on account of the sins of the whole world; but, more than all, the sins of the people of Israel afflict Him because they are His people, on whom He has looked with favor, whom He has loved the most, and whose God and Saviour He loves, in an especial way, to call Himself. What must He think, what must be His reflections, on beholding His people in array before His mind, making so ungrateful a return for His mercies and repaying all His favors with so many sins? Now they prepare ropes and chains to bind and crucify Him who came from heaven to earth in order to work out their eternal salvation. The sins of the Jewish people were far more grievous than those of all other nations, and oh! how much greater pain do they give to the Heart of Jesus!

But since we Christians have much more reason to say to Jesus that we are the people of His predilection, we have also good reason to believe that it is our sins that afflict Him most heavily. Assuredly, a sin committed by a Christian who makes profession of living in the religion of the true God is more grievous than one committed by an infidel. The mysteries and Sacraments of His faith aggravate it, and iniquity becomes more heinous in proportion as a man has stronger reasons to oblige him to follow a life of holiness. There can be no question that when a Christian offends Jesus Christ by sin—Jesus Christ whom he acknowledges as the Man-God,—he commits a greater enormity than did one of those Jews who looked on Him as a mere man. Therefore, Jesus Christ also complains with justice of the evil lives of Christians more than of the perfidy of the Jews. I shall reflect on this truth and apply it to myself.

When I duly consider my own state and examine my conscience, I reckon, O most sweet Saviour! that among all the sinners who were present to Thy mind in the garden



there is not one who afflicted Thee more sensibly than I, since I know of none more guilty or more ungrateful than myself, who have offended Thee in spite of such abundant lights and favors and helps as I have received from Thee. The sins of the Jews and of the various classes of infidels are not so grievous as mine. I am worse than they, since their ignorance is some excuse for them; whereas I have faith, which pleads against and condemns me. The Jews raged against Thy body. I, with greater cruelty, have pierced Thy soul.

O my God! I can only repeat that I am grieved and repent of my wicked life. I am pained to think that while I am easily vexed at any worldly misfortune that happens to me, I am incapable of entertaining a sincere and abiding sorrow for my sins, nor do I condole with Thee in Thy sorrows. O most gracious Jesus! give me, I beseech Thee, a proof of Thy great mercy by imparting Thy graces to a sinner who, of all men, is the least deserving of them.

My character of Christian is a powerful motive for me to be sorry for my sins. Oh, what an evil thing it is to be infinitely favored by God in His holy Church and by sin to be infinitely ungrateful to Him!

IV. The interior of Jesus Christ is a sacred sanctuary into which we may not enter. Although we can not arrive at comprehending how His soul was susceptible of suffering, while yet intimately united with God, we can not be mistaken in believing that the Divinity wrought miracles, both in leaving His Humanity to suffer, and furthermore, in positively concurring with its greater suffering. That Jesus Christ in the midst of such intense pains preserved His life is a miracle. It is a miracle that He was at the same time making His way to the possession of God and actually possessing Him. That His spirit was at the same time in bliss by reason of the glory which He enjoyed, and afflicted by the motives of sadness that overwhelmed Him; this is a miracle of exceeding wonder. The soul of Jesus Christ, by being united with God in one person, has a perfect knowledge of all there is to afflict it, and in proportion

as this knowledge is clearer, so is the affliction greater; and when under this pressure of affliction, corresponding to the highest degree of knowledge, His Humanity ought naturally to sink, it is again strengthened by His Divinity to endure.

When we are in any trouble, we find relief in the remembrance of God. We know that the martyrs rejoiced in their pains, because the grace of God refreshed them with interior sweetness and made them oblivious of their torments. But in the Passion of Jesus Christ not only does His Divinity send no drop of consolation to sweeten His cup of bitterness, but it contributes powerfully to embitter it.

I shall reflect why Jesus Christ, as God, elects to increase the sorrow of His Passion, making His suffering pure, unmitigated, and unalleviated by any comfort. He suffers to satisfy for sin; and as sin is an unmixed evil, as it alone can be properly called a real evil, the suffering must correspond to it. It must be pure and real sorrow. Hence it is that the sorrows of Our Lord, both His physical and mental sorrow, are compared to those of hell;—being sorrows most intense and unmixed, admitting of no drop of cordial to mitigate them.

Oh, what a dreadful evil is sin! and yet how frequently have I committed it as if it were something of no consequence. Though I had been guilty but of a single mortal sin, I must have despaired if left to myself. How, O my God! could I make satisfaction for so great an evil? But far be despair from me. Thanks to Thy goodness, O Eternal Father! as Thy Son made Man has satisfied for me, in Him I find rest and hope again. O Jesus, overwhelmed with miseries, but still more full of mercies! Mine are the miseries; the mercies are Thine. And oh! how far do Thy mercies exceed my miseries.

I shall prepare myself by a determined resolution to accept and endure every evil rather than ever commit a single mortal sin, since there exists no evil that deserves the name of pure evil or of real evil except sin.

V. Not only does Jesus Christ in the garden see with

His mind's eye the sins of all the world, but He beholds them as Saviour of mankind. He takes up the sins of all nations, of Jews, Gentiles, and bad Christians; and lays them on Himself to bear the weight of them, making them in a manner His own, as if they were His own sins, committed by Himself. In what a state must He have been beneath this great world of iniquities amongst which we must recollect were also our own. What must we suppose His distress to have been when weighed down with a burden so heavy and so immense.

Represent to thyself, my soul, the most innocent soul of Jesus, that neither has sinned nor could sin, and that has an extreme detestation of sin;—what must have been its trouble and affliction when loaded with so great a multitude of sins appertaining to others, without measure, bounds, or number? What a torment for that most humble soul to be under such a load of pride? for that most pure soul, under all that luxury? for that most holy soul, that soul supremely full of love for God, to bear the weight of so much impious wickedness and villainy, and so many heinous offences against God? Who could form an idea of the interior sentiment of that unspotted Humanity, obliged to conceive itself guilty of all manner of crimes and charged with their punishment?

There is no comparison or parallel by which an idea of this case can be expressed. However, we shall endeavor to understand it as we may. What an agonizing torment must it be to Jesus to feel so many sins, not His own, laid upon His back? True, He may console Himself with the thought that it all happens thus because He chooses it, and He is satisfying His own desire. But then He rejects everything that might console Him, and accepts only what may aggravate His sorrow, in order that His suffering may be unmixed and His Passion may reach the utmost limit of severity, since He comes to make satisfaction by it for sin and it must be proportioned to that same most grievous evil of sin.

Although piety is shocked at the thought, yet I cling to

it, and firmly believe, O my suffering Saviour! that Thou hast taken all my sins upon Thee to satisfy the divine justice for me; that Thou hast taken to Thyself all the reasons for sorrow that belong to me that Thou mightest impart to me Thy joy; that Thou hast made my iniquities Thine own that Thy holiness might become mine. Oh, how great are my obligations to Thee; with what pure love am I bound to love Thee in return for Thy pure unmixed sorrows! What a debt of gratitude do I owe Thy incomprehensible goodness and Thy most profound humility, since, not content with becoming Man and taking upon Thyself the infirmities of man, Thou hast also chosen to act the part of a sinner! I beseech Thee through this same humility of Thine remove pride far from me. Oh! let me not be under the dominion of a vice which is the actual cause of Thy Passion.

I shall grieve for my own sins, in imitation of Jesus Christ, who grieves for sins not His own. And as He, for these sins that are not His, humbles Himself so far as to be reputed a sinner, I shall acknowledge myself a sinner for my own sins.

VI. In the whole Passion the interior of Jesus Christ must be attentively considered, since virtue, perfection, holiness, properly are in the interior;—and it is our own interior that we have more especially to put in order. When we say that Jesus Christ has taken upon Himself all the sins of the world, we mean that He has made Himself surety for us to the divine justice. By a surety we mean a mediator who takes upon himself another person's debts, and binds himself of his own accord to pay all that which the debtor himself can not pay. So that, whenever a demand is made which the debtor does not pay, the surety must pay it, though bound to do so by no reason but because he is his surety.

Now, we being debtors to God and deserving of eternal death for sin, and sin being a debt of an infinite amount on account of the infinite majesty of the God whom we have offended, and it being beyond the ability of the whole



human race together and of all other creatures whatsoever to pay this debt, what did the Son of God do? By His charity, only, He was moved to take compassion on man. He became Man, and in His character of Man-God He presented Himself to the Eternal Father as our surety, and taking upon Himself the whole of our debt, He pledged Himself to pay it for us.

In this light we must regard Jesus Christ in the garden. He is loaded with our sins; that is, with our debts. Having made Himself surety for us, not as though He had need of us; it being we only who have extreme need of Him. Accordingly, we see Him now as our surety, in the act of paying and making satisfaction for us; delivering His soul to most afflicting mortal sadness and offering it up as payment of an infinite amount, to cancel the items registered against us in the books of divine justice and to set us free from eternal death.

Let us reflect. If there existed a debt that all the revenues of all the princes and kings in the world could not pay, we should consider this debt a very heavy one. What kind of debt then shall we say, what a most heavy debt, is that incurred by a mortal sin, which can not be liquidated with all the merits of all the creatures that are on earth and in heaven, and for which no adequate satisfaction can be made except by the most cruel Passion of a Man-God. This thought is sufficient to keep me humble, as I must look upon myself as a poor, unhappy bankrupt. And now, Jesus having made satisfaction for me with His own life, what do I owe to this my Surety?

O good Jesus! if I had at my disposal the lives of all men in the world, and were to employ them all for entire ages in Thy service, it would all amount to nothing as a return for what I owe Thee. How then shall I not give Thee, at least, the remains of this one poor life of mine by living henceforward only to love and to serve Thee, as a return of gratitude for the grievous afflictions borne by Thee to deliver me from eternal pains? O my God, may my life be wholly Thine!



Jesus Christ is become my surety; but I also, as debtor-in-chief to the divine justice, must coöperate with His merits to satisfy, as well as I may, by penance for my sins.

VII. Our afflicted Saviour groans and sinks under this accumulated physical and mental pain; and finding Himself, as it were, abandoned, deprived of that spiritual unction which He usually experiences, He turns for consolation in His necessity to His three confidential Apostles, who are with Him. And as on Tabor He had given them proofs of His being true God by unveiling the treasures of His glory, so now in the garden He gives to the same three evidences of His being true Man by discovering to them His human infirmities, which are not imaginary but real and truly deserving of compassion. He says to them, *My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay you here and watch with Me.*<sup>1</sup>

What sayest thou, my soul, on beholding the God of consolation and the Comforter of the afflicted reduced to so great, so bitter tribulation as to have need of comfort? He who, a while ago, with His most beautiful countenance dispersed the clouds of melancholy from the souls of those who saw Him and carried away their hearts, brought to such extremity as to beg a little comfort in His distress from three poor fishermen? What dost thou say on hearing Him in His wretched state asking, with a lamentable voice, pity and compassion from His friends like another Job?

We admired Jesus Christ when, in the supper room, He condescended to wash the feet of His Apostles. This, however, was an honorable kind of humiliation, in the midst of which He asserted His dignity as Master and Lord and made Himself feared and obeyed. But now He humbles Himself so far as to confess to these three His own infirmities and to beg their assistance, as one who, of himself, has neither spirit, nor strength, nor courage, to bear up against troubles. This is humbling Himself, as though He were abject and pusillanimous; He here shows Himself a poor wretched worm of a man, without one visible trace

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 38.

of His Divinity left. All this abjection was of His own free choice. Oh, what a great example it is for me!

But, furthermore, I see that after their divine Master has thus humbled Himself to His Apostles they continue stretched on the ground, their eyes half closed in sleep, and as if they were beings devoid of understanding, they make Him no reply. No, not one half word of consolation or compassion. Thus has He Himself ordered it, that His Humanity should seek some one to comfort Him and find none; so that, in His Passion, He might be left utterly destitute of relief either from God or man. Ah, my Jesus, I exclaim, what charity, what humility, what patience! However, this is something for me not only to admire, but to imitate. And when shall I bewail my pride and ingratitude, if I am not moved to bewail it now in contemplating this mystery of Thy sublime charity and of Thy profound humility? Eternal Father, move me to make those affections which Thou dost desire to see in me on an occasion of this kind.

In imitation of Jesus Christ, who, in His interior passion, willed to deprive Himself of all human consolation, I also resolve to deprive my sensual appetite of some indulgence that it craves. The remembrance of the bitterness of His cup shall make all things sweet to me.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE APOSTLES ASLEEP IN THE GARDEN.

I. JESUS CHRIST, having taken with Him to the garden the three Apostles, Peter, James, and John, His confidential friends, tells them of the sadness that so bitterly afflicts Him at the prospect of the dreadful Passion, the hour of which is now rapidly approaching. They have scarcely heard His complaint and lamentation, in a distressed tone and with sighs that would move any one to compassion, before they yield to heavy melancholy; and, overcome with sorrow, they fall asleep.

These three Apostles were selected by Our Saviour as the most fervent of all. As they alone had been witnesses of the manifestation of His Divinity in His glorious Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, they ought also to have been courageous enough to stand by Him with the greatest fortitude and watchfulness now that His afflictions, of which they have been forewarned, were drawing near. Notwithstanding, they lie down carelessly and lazily to sleep at a time when, above all others, they should have shown their fidelity and vigilance. They have not one sentiment of sympathy for Jesus, while He is suffering such exceeding grief for them.

Whether sleepiness arise from natural weakness or from the temptations of the devil, there is no doubt that it shows vicious slothfulness to fall asleep when we should reflect on the Passion of Jesus Christ. I have then to consider myself. At times I have, it is true, some little fervor; but in general, oh, what tepidity and sloth, what heaviness and aversion and weariness do I experience when I meditate on the sacred Passion! What are my feelings even now, while I am representing to myself the sadness of Jesus Christ in the garden? O my God! my affections are positively asleep. I have neither spirit to imitate Him, nor feeling to sympathize with Him. Can there be a worse case of spiritual sloth than to be unwilling to meditate on those pains which Jesus was so willing to suffer? There is a kind of lukewarmness that moves God to abandon a soul. Who knows that the careless, lazy state in which I pass my days is not this identical thing?

O my God! this reflection fills me with alarm. It might easily lead me to despondency, to which I am much inclined; but I implore Thy grace that it may rather be a means for me to acquire humility. Let me be urged, at the very time in which I am most lukewarm, to acknowledge how great is my misery, and how great, consequently, is my need of assistance. I prefer to be tepid and humble, gathering fruits of humility from my tepidity, than fervent and presumptuous, trusting with vain complacency to my

sentiments of zeal. And even at this moment, what great reason have I to humble myself on account of my tepidity, feeling, as I do, on the one hand, a desire which Thou, O my God! givest me, to seek perfection in earnest; and on the other, a conviction that I have not strength for it, and that I can not even with profit make a few considerations on Thy Passion.

I shall watch over this lukewarmness that it may not become habitual to me. The turning to account my present lukewarmness in order to acquire humility will be an excellent means, in time, to gain fervor.

II. Jesus Christ, finding the Apostles asleep after He had charged them to be watchful in prayer, reproves Peter especially for not having done violence to himself and watched at least one hour with Him. Peter, a short time previously, had declared that he would have more courage than the rest to endure prisons and death for love of His Master; and it was for this reason that this divine Master took him with Him into the garden, that he might learn how all amounts to nothing which an unassisted man can do who of himself promises great things. Deservedly He now humbles him and gives him to understand, by his present weakness, how rash had been his boastful protestation. As though He would say to him: *What? Could you not watch one hour with Me?*<sup>1</sup>

I shall consider how Peter, convicted by experience and by his own conscience, makes no reply, for he knows not what to answer to this reproof. It adds to his confusion to recollect that he had often been able to watch and labor whole nights at fishing with his companions, and now he has a practical proof that he has not the grace to watch and pray one short hour for the good of his soul. Oh, how much there is here for me to apply to myself!

In the service of God, especially in prayer, what feelings of heaviness and fatigue come over me,—whereas I am always ready for anything that suits my taste or gratifies my sense! Nothing tires me except my exercises of piety. I

(i) St. Matt. xxvi, 40.

am never tired of doing nothing, or of idle conversation. But how long do I intend to continue in this slothful state? What excuse shall there be for me, O my God! at Thy tribunal when it will be seen how often I have controlled my passions from motives of human prudence and to satisfy vanity, but have scarcely ever been able to conquer them for Thy love?

The reproof made to the Apostle applies equally to me. Sometimes I say that I would gladly give my life for the love of God. But how can this be, when I can not mortify myself in a slight trifle of daily occurrence for the love of God? I have practical lessons of humility, frequently enough, in my cowardice and weakness; yet, for all this, I am not humble.

When I reflect, O my God, I imagine at first that I trust in Thee; but, after all, I perceive that in my resolutions I have a lurking presumption of my own strength. How can this be ever eradicated, since in the very act of resolving not to be presumptuous self-love insinuates itself and makes me presume upon myself again? O my dear Jesus! behold my misery and assist me. Let me not fall under the curse pronounced on the man who trusts in men; a curse that might apply to me, since I trust in myself. Let me rather share in that precious blessing promised to the man that trusts in Thee.

I shall examine myself with regard to spiritual sloth, which makes me either leave undone or do with a bad grace whatever I have to perform in the service of God. I shall endeavor to do my utmost to conquer it, since of its own nature it is a capital or mortal sin.

III. We must weigh well the reason why Jesus Christ enjoins His Apostles to pray, and why He reproves them when, instead of praying, He finds them asleep. *Watch ye, and pray, He says, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*<sup>1</sup> He does not tell them to pray that they may not be tempted, but that they may not be overcome by the temptation which

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 41.



will shortly come upon them to deny Him, fly from and forsake Him. It is as if He had said: You are My Apostles, the princes of My Church, strengthened with the food of My Body and Blood and of My holy word. But with all this, you have need of prayer to keep you from falling, because, in the dangers that are coming upon you, your weak nature will give way if not supported by divine help.

These words we should consider as addressed to ourselves also by the Saviour of the world, since we have so many enemies within and without so fully capable of making us transgress and come to perdition. There is no place nor time in which we may not be assailed unawares, and have to fight for our life. Hence the necessity of fortifying ourselves by prayer that we may not be overthrown. By neglecting prayer the Apostles were vanquished by temptation. How then shall we escape ruin if we do not pray; that is, if we have not recourse to God to obtain His help?

Reflect, O my soul, that there is no temptation more dangerous for us than those by which, for one excuse or other, the devil tries to make us give up prayer; since, if he conquers us in this, he has conquered in all. Nay, to neglect prayer is already to be overcome. How greatly then ought we to value prayer! What diligence do we use in making it?

O wretched, miserable being that I am, besides the temptations of the devil and the world I am beset with temptations from my own depraved passions, and I realize the extreme need I have of recommending myself to Thee, O my God! Yet I am so careless, so negligent in this respect. Nay, more; I am so presumptuous as to imagine myself in safety without prayer. One of the following alternatives must be true: either I am already a slave of my enemies, while my blindness hides it from me; or being, by Thy mercy, preserved from so many sins that I might commit and do not, I am yet a most wicked sinner because most ungrateful to Thy infinite goodness. Be this as it may, my state is fearfully perilous. My Jesus, I beseech Thee to

give me a love of prayer, and enlighten me to know how great my misery is without it.

I shall repent of the innumerable occasions that I ought to have prayed and might have prayed, but did not pray. I shall thank the Lord, who has suffered me not to fall into destruction, as I deserved, and henceforth I shall love prayer.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### PRAYER OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE GARDEN.

**I.** **IN** the height of His overwhelming sorrows, Jesus Christ does not yield to feelings of impatience or indignation, as we are wont to do when adversity befalls us. He has recourse to God by prayer, as had been foretold of Him of old in the Scriptures. As God, He does not pray. Because, as God, He is in all things equal to His Eternal Father and can do whatever He pleases. But He prays as Man, who has need of divine help to be supported in his human infirmities. He prays, also, as head and guide of His Church, to teach us, by His example, that we must have recourse to prayer in every distress and necessity, especially of the soul.

Behold, my soul, with what humility and reverence He makes His prayer, on His knees, prostrate with His face on the earth, as though unworthy to lift it toward Heaven. It would appear as if He forgot that He was the Son of God. So profoundly does He abase Himself, that, not content with humbling Himself to pray as a Man, He chooses to be as the least of men.

Let us consider: If Our Saviour, the Man-God, seeks nowhere but in prayer for relief in His anguish, how will miserable men like we are presume to think they can bear up against tribulation by their own strength without prayer? Are we stronger or more constant than He? I shall speak for myself, proud, ignorant fool that I am! Is this what Jesus teaches me,—that is, to seek relief by

converse with men when overtaken with sadness or sloth? Oh, how slow am I to seek help from God in my daily necessities when some proud passion disquiets and disturbs me!

O my God! I am grieved at my want of fidelity in following Thy instructions and imitating Thy example. I ought to do nothing night and day but pray with sighs, groans, and tears to appease Thy justice, and obtain Thy mercy for all the evil I have done and all the good that I have left undone. And yet, here I am, cold, frozen, without a spark of warmth, without the least zeal for the fulfilling of my duties. My Jesus! grant me, I beseech Thee, a little of that holy fervor with which Thou didst make Thy prayer to Thy Eternal Father in the garden. Give me, also, some of Thy sincere humility that I may acknowledge myself for what I am in truth, dust and ashes, in the sight of Thy divine Majesty. If, when I pray, I can do nothing but humble myself, and again humble myself, it will be no small thing, because I know that Thou always hast regard to the prayer of the humble.

As I know not what shall happen to me from one hour to another, in the time of prosperity I shall frequently remember God and implore His help, that it may not be wanting to me amid the adversities and dangers that perhaps are about to come upon me.

II. The prayer of Jesus Christ in the garden was made with humility, as He showed by His attitude, His body being prostrate on the earth. It was made with fervor; that is, as St. Paul describes it, with great earnestness of voice and spirit, together with tears. It was, moreover, made with the greatest possible confidence, as may be gathered from His words: *Abba, Father*, He says, *all things are possible to Thee*.<sup>1</sup> Oh, if we could but see His interior, with what sentiments of love, respect, and reverence, He honors the Divine Majesty in saying these words! At other times, He invoked the Father by the simple name Father. Now He calls Him His Father; for He now stands

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Mark xiv, 36.

as representative of the body of His faithful people, and He teaches us, by example, what He has already taught us by word,—that is, to call God our Father when we pray, as He, when He prays, calls Him His Father.

This is a paramount instruction. Jesus Christ does not desire that we should any longer call on God with those feelings of servile fear which were peculiar to the Old Law, but with filial love, which is proper to the New Law. This lesson is indispensable. We can not, in truth, pray to God at all if we do not hope for a favorable hearing. In order, then, that we may pray with confidence and hope, two things must be believed. The first is, that God, by His goodness, is really Our Father, and, as a true Father, loves us. The other is, that God is almighty, and that there is nothing that He can not do. These two points of faith are sufficient to raise in our heart the most perfect and abiding hope. Is there any favor that I may not ask for and also hope to gain, knowing, as I do, that my God, being my Father, wishes me all the good that He Himself possesses, and being almighty, is able to give me every good?

O most lovely Jesus! I know that all my happiness, for time and eternity, depends upon this one thing. Therefore, I come before Thee to implore that, as Thou hast taught me the manner in which to pray, Thou wouldst also assist me by Thy grace to adopt it. Make me say to the Eternal Father, *Pater noster, qui es in coelis*, with such sincere humility as may keep me deeply immersed in the centre of my nothingness and misery, and with a touching sentiment of cordial affection and profound resignation like unto Thine when Thou didst exclaim in the garden, *Pater mi, O my Father!*

O Eternal Father! who art pleased that I also should call Thee Father, inspire me with that filial love and reverence which I owe to Thy Majesty. I am not worthy to be loved by Thee, but Thou art most worthy to be loved by me. I am a poor sinner, notwithstanding that by the merits of Jesus I am Thy child; yes, Thine own child, although I do not conduct myself as a child ought to do; and though I

am not worthy to be counted among Thy servants, I appeal to Thy mercy, which vouchsafes to reckon me Thy child, and ask for grace to imitate Thy worthy Child in His holy virtues, to Thy glory and my own eternal salvation.

I shall always remember to exercise in prayer these three virtues taught me by Jesus Christ:—humility, fervor of spirit, and confidence. If one of them be wanting, my prayer will be weak and will not be acceptable to God.

III. Prayer being an act of the will, which expresses some desire to God with a view to its being granted, we must say that the prayers of Jesus Christ in the garden were two-fold. In the first place, He prays that His Humanity may be dispensed from drinking the chalice of His Passion. This prayer is in conformity with the natural desire of sense, which shrinks from suffering. In the second place, He prays that, nevertheless, all may be done which seems fit to God; and this prayer is in conformity with reason, in submission to the divine will.

Jesus Christ prays to the Eternal Father, in the first place, that He would vouchsafe to deliver Him from His Passion now at hand. He prays thus, with the voice of His flesh, in behalf of the sensitive appetite, to let us know that He is really Man, subject to the weaknesses of nature; but immediately after, by an act of most perfect virtue, He again prays that the will of God may be done, to teach us that we also must pray in this manner. He prays, first, in the language of a man under affliction desiring to be delivered from it; that men may learn to pray with the words of the Man-God, and may desire nothing but what God pleases. O wisdom and goodness of our divine Saviour! who humbles Himself so far as to speak the sentiments of our heart in order to unite it with the Heart of God.

Reflect, O my soul! on this example given Thee by Jesus Christ. Though we are allowed to make known to God our natural necessities and to ask Him for deliverance from the troubles of this world, yet to the prayer asking for that which sense craves we should always add the other, that all may happen according to the will of God. In the *Pater*



*noster* there is a petition to God for all that regards our bodily welfare; but with what disposition do we say these three sweet words, *Fiat voluntas tua*?

I utter the wish very often, O my God! that Thy will be done; but I utter it with my mouth, not truly with my heart, for my attachment to my own will is too strong. I would wish Thy will to be done, but I have a greater wish that my own will should be done, and when it is not I am vexed. If sickness or misfortune overtakes me, although this is according to Thy will, it is opposed to mine and I do not submit to it. Correct in me this disorder, O my God! by giving me light to understand perfectly that, however just and right my will may appear to myself, it is, at all times, a crooked will, that may deceive and lead me astray; and that Thy will, which is always just, always holy, is the only correct rule by which I should be guided if I would enjoy true happiness in time and in eternity. Thus may it be, and thus it will be, if Thou wilt be pleased to strengthen me by Thy grace.

The only perfection at which I should aim is this: to keep the inclinations of sense within me subject to reason, and my human reason subject to the will of God. Therefore, this shall be the sole object of my care, since this one point gained embraces all.

IV. From the disobedience of Adam proceeded the ruin of the world;—and every sin of ours may be traced to disobedience, as it is caused by our being more disposed to follow the movements of our sensual appetite than the Commandments of God. Jesus Christ, consequently, having taken upon Him to reconcile us with God, has most wisely, in order to make reparation to the outraged honor of the Deity, opposed to the general disobedience His most perfect obedience, of which He manifested the most glorious example in the garden.

In this place He excites, by His own will, in His sensitive appetites, a violent repugnance to pain, to dishonor, and to death; and to show that His sorrow is such that none but God can alleviate, He has recourse to God. He represents

to Him the anguish of His Humanity, to move Him to compassion. But as He came into the world to do the will of God, not of the flesh, He immediately asks that the will of God be done, without regard to the flesh, as if He would say: Let nature resist and struggle as it may, it ought to obey God, and I choose that it should obey.

O admirable obedience! He distinctly sees what His sufferings, in all their variety, are to be, and the sensitive appetite, which shrinks from suffering, makes as many acts of resistance as there are painful objects before His mind; but reason, on the other side, makes as many more acts of obedience, renewing in each, with most intense fervor, its submission to the Eternal Father, and accepting, one by one, all these most bitter pains, with the words, *But yet not My will, but Thine be done.*<sup>1</sup> Let us permit the angels to marvel; for ourselves, let us hearken to the example given for our imitation. Behold, my soul! what great repugnance Jesus has overcome in His most delicate Humanity for the sake of being obedient to God, and reflect on thyself.

Ah, my God! in me any slight opposition of my passions is sufficient to turn me away from obeying Thy divine Majesty; and now looking back on the innumerable occasions on which I have disobeyed Thee rather than resist my sensual inclinations, I grieve and repent of this exceeding wickedness, and in satisfaction for the injury I have done Thee by my disobedience I offer Thee the most acceptable obedience of Thy most beloved Son.

And turning to Thee also, my most loving Saviour! I beseech Thee to impart to me Thy spirit, to enable me to make a perfect prayer like Thine. Thou didst not occupy Thyself in the garden with making a dry meditation with Thy understanding on Thy approaching Passion; but Thou didst come to practical acts of Thy will, accepting Thy Passion with affectionate obedience. This is what I should do. But, alas, how tepid, cold and languishing is my prayer! Stir up, I implore Thee, my weak will, to effica-

(1) St. Luke xxii, 42.

cious resolutions of imitating Thee in the practice of all virtues, but especially in obedience to the will of God.

I shall accustom myself to the use of this prayer: *Grant, O my God! that Thy holy will may be always done in me. Make me know the things that please Thee, and give me grace to do them.* Moreover I shall, as occasions offer, do violence to my will.

V. All that Jesus Christ has done for the salvation of the world He did as Man-God, because He could not, as Man only, or as God only, have been a mediator capable of reconciling us with God. As Man-God He humbled Himself, He prayed, He obeyed. And we must remark a superior excellence in His obedience. It is not true that the Eternal Father obliged this Man-God to suffer and die. It was He who, of His own will, spontaneously offered Himself for the salvation of the world; for the sole motive that He knew the Eternal Father was pleased that He should do so.

A good son, who wishes to honor his father, acts in like manner. It is enough for him to know what his father wishes. The inclinations of His father he looks upon as commands, which move him to obedience, and that of a kind so much the more noble as it is more free and complete. It is thus, precisely, that Jesus Christ has acted. He knew the more He should suffer for our salvation the more satisfaction, honor, and pleasure He would render to the Eternal Father. And from the most ardent love that He entertained for His Father and for us He straightway undertakes to suffer, voluntarily, as much as His Humanity may be capable of suffering. Oh, what obedience! What an example! What a spectacle of confusion to me!

How many things there are which I am convinced would be agreeable to God if I did them for His love. I know that by the practice of humility, of patience, and of so many other virtues, I should please God. But the thought of pleasing God scarcely moves me. Nay more, I feel a reluctance to fulfil even those things that are commanded me. In short, the tenor of my life is such that I satisfy

myself with not doing good, and take no pains to do good. In those points of duty to which I do not see myself evidently obliged, I take advantage of my liberty to gratify my passions rather than God, and my inclinations always lead me to favor concupiscence, by indulging in vanity, rather than conscience, by adhering to and loving truth.

What an abuse, O my God, do I make of Thy precious example! It was not of precept for Thee to suffer or to die, and yet Thou didst accept suffering and death simply to give pleasure to Thy Father and to honor Him by Thy obedience. I ought also to do the same. As, then, Thou hast, of Thy bounty, imparted to me Thy merits, so likewise, I beseech Thee, impart to me the sentiments of Thy Heart that it may be my pleasure to obey Thee for the simple object of giving Thee pleasure. Make me know how and in what I may please Thee, and incline me powerfully to seek in all things not my own gratification but Thine.

I shall obey the inspirations given me to do good, and the satisfaction of pleasing God shall be sufficient to animate me to this obedience without weighing so accurately whether the thing be of precept or of counsel.

VI. Jesus Christ prayed three times during this last night, and His prayer continued not less than an hour. It is probable, therefore, that after recommending His Humanity to His Eternal Father, and resigning Himself to His holy will, as He accepted His Passion for us all, that He prayed for all.

As He takes a detailed view of each part of His Passion, He sees that it is a fountain whence shall flow forth upon us all the graces necessary for our eternal salvation. But as He also sees that many of these graces, merited by His Passion, have, moreover, according to the divine oracles, to be asked and obtained for us by Himself, we may imagine that as He resigns Himself in detail to the suffering of the scourging, of ignominies, of the thorns, and of the cross, so likewise He offers all for us to His Father, with prayers and supplications, with cries and tears; and that the Father,

being honored by the dignity and humility of His beloved Son, grants all that He asks. It is true He does not accept His prayer to be delivered from His sufferings, as this was the desire of sense; but if He does not accept this prayer it is because it is proper that it should not be accepted, and because He Himself prays that in this He may not be heard. Meanwhile, it is of truth, that all that He asks for besides this is granted.

Reflect, now, my soul, how great are thy obligations to thy Redeemer. Faith, hope, charity, the fruits of the Sacraments, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the inspirations, the graces, all the special helps that are given thee to obtain eternal bliss,—all these are the effects and fruits proceeding from the Passion and the prayer of Jesus Christ. He has merited, in general, for all. But all His merits are, in particular, for thee in such a way as though He had suffered and prayed and merited for no one else but for thee alone. As if, in short, thou alone hadst been in the world.

O my good Jesus! I thank Thee with my whole heart, and I am sorry that I have so often abused Thy merits by not coöperating with them as I am bound to do. Remember, I entreat Thee, that among the innumerable graces that Thou hast merited for me, this is one, namely:—the grace to imitate the example of Thy life, but especially of Thy holy Passion. This is the grace which I humbly pray that Thou wilt not deny me. Do not permit that the fruit of Thy most fervent prayers should be lost. If it should be lost, I am convinced that the fault will be my own. Remove far from me this evil, which would be insupportable, irremediable, and eternal. It is Thy will that I should be saved. Therefore, let this will of Thine be effectually carried out.

I shall rest every prayer that I make on the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and unite it with the prayer of Jesus Christ. Thus I shall have no doubt of obtaining whatever I ask, through Jesus Christ, in the manner most expedient for me.



## CHAPTER XIX.

## A CONSOLING ANGEL APPEARS TO JESUS.

I. THE prayer of Jesus Christ in the garden was humble, fervent, and full of confidence; but it was also persevering. A lesson for us not to become weary in praying to God, since by perseverance we shall obtain that which other virtues, without it, will not ensure to us. The blessed Jesus prays once, and a second time, with His eyes lifted up to Heaven, that if the human race can be saved without His dying on the cross it may thus be saved. Nature, too, vehemently shrinks from such a death. But He has not a glimmer of light to assure Him that His prayer is heard, as though in His regard Heaven were made of brass.

Consequently His distress increases, His mind being overwhelmed with mortal sadness, in total abandonment, left to its own natural force. Whither can He turn for relief? If He looks back to the Apostles, He finds them asleep; if He has recourse to His Father, His Father who has always heard Him when He prayed for others, now that He prays for Himself seems to consider Him as unworthy of notice, viewing in Him only the clay of Adam. What a torment is it for human nature, in a state of abandonment, to represent to itself the Almighty as become cruel toward it; to feel itself deluged with bitterness by the hand from which it expects sweetness! Nevertheless, Jesus shows no impatience nor vexation. He prays for the third time. When, behold! an angel immediately appears to Him from Heaven to strengthen Him.

Thus God deals with those who, groaning under affliction, do not become weary of having recourse to Him for help by prayer. He infallibly consoles, He blesses them with His favors, in the manner and at the time most to their advantage. Thus would He also act toward me if I did not allow myself to become lukewarm. When I ask for a grace from God, whether it be humility, or charity, or the love of chastity, or any other, I desire to have it quickly granted. If the answer is delayed I lose confidence and am disturbed,

and have no longer courage to continue praying. Oh, what presumption! Jesus Christ, who has every possible right to expect to be heard the first time, receives no consolation till the third. And I, a miserable sinner, do I fancy that I need but open my mouth to ask for a grace and immediately it will be given me?

Correct, O most patient Saviour! my bold, inconsiderate conceit. Make me learn perseverance from Thy example. I deserve chastisements and not graces. If it pleases Thee to give me graces, it will be of Thy free mercy alone. Who am I that I should prescribe laws for Thy mercy? The poor beggar that knocks at the door of Thy bounty must have patience.

I shall strive to be humble, because whoever is humble considers himself unworthy to be heard. He never grows weary, because his hopes being based entirely and always on the divine Goodness, He never loses confidence. Perseverance is the daughter of humility.

II. We know not what the angel said to Jesus Christ, since it is not recorded in the Gospel; but as we know that he appeared to Him in order to strengthen Him, we must believe that the message that he brought was calculated to encourage Him. The tradition of the Church usually represents this angel in the act of presenting a chalice to the Saviour. By the chalice must be understood His Passion, according to the usual mode of expression. Therefore, it is probable that the heavenly messenger, in the first place, represents to Him on the part of His Eternal Father that mankind can not be saved, according to the decree already passed, except by means of His Passion. Secondly, to encourage Him to suffer, we may suppose that He reminds Him that if His Passion is painful it will be proportionably fruitful.

What a satisfaction must it be to Jesus Christ to behold millions and millions of souls who, being now in a state of damnation, will through the outpouring of His most precious Blood be saved! With what vigor also may we suppose He is inspired on hearing that after three days He

shall rise again triumphant over sin and hell, and that His sufferings shall pass away and be followed by eternal glory.

I experience comfort in Thy consolations, O most sweet Saviour! though they were but momentary. Ah! and am I to hope that among the souls that Thou didst see who should be saved in consequence of Thy Redemption, my soul was numbered? Yes, yes; I shall hope that it may be so. I hope through Thy merits. However, I know well that in order to be saved I must labor and suffer. But shall I not also find that comfort which Thou didst find in the garden when Thou didst willingly accept Thy Passion for the salvation of others, by undertaking willingly to suffer for the salvation of my own soul? How can that chalice be distasteful to me of which Thou Thyself hast first drunk?

Most loving Jesus! who wast consoled by an angel for my sake rather than for Thy own, grant me an ardent desire of my eternal salvation, and that suffices. For what can be difficult in the Christian life for one who earnestly desires to save his soul? Suppose the practice of virtue accompanied with the greatest trouble, and the observance of the divine counsels and commandments as difficult as you please—suppose all this: yet, does it not all become as easy and sweet as it appeared hard when I reflect that I shall go to Paradise, and that in that blessed country my happiness will be eternal? However heavy may be the crosses of this world, is it not a powerful encouragement for any one who bears them for the love of God to know that all passes away here below, and that above the glory will be eternal? But the greatest inducement that I can have to do violence to myself, O my Jesus! is Thy example.

An angel came to encourage Jesus, but it is Jesus Himself who comes to encourage me with the promise of eternal life if I am faithful in following His example. I shall renew my acts of hope.

III. Jesus Christ knew all that was to be said to Him by the angel, and the Man-God had no need of being instructed or encouraged by an angel, as He was the sovereign Lord of the angels. Being God, He is capable of consoling

Himself, but He does not wish to receive interior assistance from His Divinity; and, as though He were no more than man inferior to the angels, He is pleased that an angel should come to Him, that He may humble Himself the more by being in want of the help of His servants. When He was in the desert, angels ministered to Him as God. Now an angel comes to encourage Him as Man, to support the infirmities of man.

Oh, what a school of astounding humility is here presented to my gaze! The angel sent by the Eternal Father humbles himself and speaks to Jesus Christ with profound reverence and adoration. Jesus Christ, on His side, humbles Himself and receives the words of the angel as words of God, with reverential submission. The angel humbles himself to the Man-God. The Man-God humbles Himself to the angel. Will this marvelous humility be of no advantage for the cure of my pride and haughtiness?

If an angel, who in consideration of the ministry committed to him must be one of the most exalted order, speaks with such humility to Jesus Christ, with what humility ought I, a miserable creature, to speak to Him when I present myself before Him to meditate on His sacred Passion? Remembering what I am as to my body, which is a vile worm, and to become the food of worms, and as to my soul, an abominable sink of wickedness and iniquity, I should tremble with reverence and be amazed to think how this Man-God, kind and indulgent as He is, can endure me in His sight. And yet how do I appear before Him, whether in regard to my interior recollection or my exterior attitude?

Again, if Jesus Christ, who is greater than all the angels, humbles Himself to an angel with such docility and reverence as though He was inferior to him in greatness and dignity, with what humility ought I to conduct myself toward my neighbors, esteeming myself most vile and abject, as there is no one more ungrateful to the divine Majesty than I? And yet, how contemptuous am I to my in-

feriors, how haughty with my equals, how insolent to my superiors!

Oh, how odious and insupportable to all is my pride! How disgusted must my humble guardian angel be with me, beholding me so proud! Dear angel, whom the mercy of God has given me for helper, have pity on me; inspire me with sentiments of humility like thine, and through the humility of Jesus obtain for me this virtue so essential from the great God, the exalter of the humble.

I shall be devout to my angel guardian for this reason also, because he continually gives me lessons of humility by his example; since he does not refuse to watch day and night over a creature so miserable as I am.

IV. To the consideration of the chalice, full of bitterness and pains, of Jesus Christ, which is presented to Him by the angel and received by Him with most perfect conformity to His Father's will, we are taught by the divine oracles to join the consideration of another chalice which is placed before us by the world. A chalice that flatters the senses and fascinates the soul with apparent sweetness, and then drives it on to the excess of vice and exposes it to the wrath of God.

Throughout this wretched life we are at liberty to choose between the chalice of Jesus Christ—that is, carrying our cross for His love, and the chalice of the world—that is, to spend pleasant days, as they are called, in sinful amusements. He who chooses the chalice of Jesus Christ, although he may in times past have been a great sinner, will be justified and saved and will be inebriated with the flood of eternal bliss in heaven. He who chooses that of the world will be damned, and will drink in hell of that bitter cup of woe which the damned drink forever and which is never drained.

Which of these two chalices dost thou prefer, O my soul? The chalice of the world, as thou knowest, seems sweet to him that tastes it from the indulgence that it gives to the passions; but it is deceitful, uncertain, and evanescent, leaving nothing after it but stifling remorse and sorrow.



The chalice of Jesus Christ thou knowest also and thou hast experienced that it seems bitter, but in reality it is sweet; for what satisfaction, what joy, is the portion of him who serves God from his heart! Therefore, does the choice require thought and consultation? Why do we still wait?

Ah, my Jesus, my God! I renounce the world, and I pray Thee to let its alluring chalice pass from me: *Transeat a me calix iste*,<sup>1</sup> that I may not even have the slightest recollection of its bitter sweets. Thy chalice I love, I long for, I choose. By drinking of that chalice, Thou hast become to me so lovely. This is the chalice that Thou dost offer me and which I accept: the painful chalice of penance, the laborious chalice of patience, the chalice full of love, of holy charity. O my God! make me worthy of it by making it dearer to me than all the treasures of the world. Too late have I known its value, and yet I am Thine in time. O chalice of Jesus, chalice of salvation, how sweet, how goodly, art thou in my eyes! If for no other reason, O my Jesus! I accept it willingly in thanksgiving to Thee for having so willingly drunk it for love of me. I am still a sinner of the earth. O let me taste of Thy mercies that I may not become a sinner of hell, where there is no forgiveness.

I shall detest my past life, by which I have so often deserved hell, and I shall renew my purpose of persevering in a devout life, after the example of Jesus Christ.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### AGONY OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE GARDEN.

I. THE Passion of Jesus Christ is full of miracles. This is also a miracle, that He received comfort from the heavenly messenger without His interior sadness being in the least alleviated. Nay, this very comfort helped rather to increase it. In meditation we may form pious conjec-

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 39.

tures of the nature of this comfort, but it is not exactly known. This only do we know, that immediately after receiving the comfort Jesus Christ fell into an agony; since, in the Gospel, the agony is mentioned directly after the comfort.

When it is said that He was in an agony we must understand that He was literally reduced to the distressing, pitiable condition of those persons who sigh and suffer most severely in the agonies of death. We must further believe that His agony was an effect of nothing but His most ardent charity. He had declared that He would willingly die to give life to the world by His death. And as He knows that He can die but once, He chooses, at least, to suffer twice the agonies of death—once by causing them of His own accord in Himself, as now, in advance of the time in which they are to be forced upon Him by the Jews on Calvary. The impiety of His executioners will have a share in the agony that Jesus Christ has to suffer on the cross. His agony in the garden is an outcome of His charity alone. This it is that, strong as death, fortifies His Heart in that conflict with sense, and in spite of sense makes Him long to die for us upon the cross. In the act of obediently accepting the chalice of His Passion and death He suddenly falls fainting to the ground in mortal agony.

O most loving, most lovely Saviour! why thus, of Thine own accord, dost Thou anticipate this painful agony? If Thou desirest my salvation will not that Passion so near at hand suffice? Ah! yes. What Thou art soon to suffer will be more than enough for me. But to satisfy the depth of Thy love is not enough for Thee. O the love, the mercy, the kindness and charity of Jesus, who plunges into such excesses merely from compassion for my miserable soul! Permit not, O Lord, that I should be ungrateful to Thy love. I know that ingratitude is, beyond measure, hateful to Thee. Therefore, that I may not be ungrateful to Thee, I thank Thee for that most bitter Passion which Thou didst suffer in the garden for me to deliver me from eternal death. Yes, I thank Thee, and marveling at Thy

goodness, which condescends to suffer so much for me, I compassionate Thee, and in compassion for Thee I offer Thee that compassion which Thou hast had for me.

It is proper that I should admire, return thanks, and compassionate; but I ought also to suffer, mortifying myself in something for love of Jesus Christ, who was pleased to suffer so much for love of me. He requires that we should imitate Him.

II. It being decreed that none will be crowned who do not fight, Jesus Christ, as it were, undertakes a war for us. His agony is nothing else than a battle in which nature and sense make their final and greatest efforts to struggle with and resist death. At the moment that the angel presents to Him the chalice of the Passion, death also comes before Him in a form the most horrible and terrifying that may be imagined. He sees at that very time that His enemies, led by Judas, are leaving the city and coming armed in search of Him, to bind Him and carry Him off to take away His life. This apprehension becomes so intense and strong that it penetrates Him through and through, and with most poignant anguish conducts Him to the verge of death.

The will of Jesus Christ consents to die for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; but His physical powers having the most violent repugnance to dying, so fierce a conflict arises within Him that the convulsions and vehemence of the insupportable anguish cast Him into an agony. He does not receive from His Divinity, nor from His human reason, the least help to bear Him up against it. All is thus ordered by His own voluntary choice, that man in Him should suffer, in his own unassisted substance, as man. Therefore, no one can be excused from imitating Him by saying that He, being God, could not suffer or be in pain no matter how ardently He might desire it.

In meditating on this agony reflect well, my soul, that Jesus Christ ordained that His sensitive powers should resist to an extreme degree so that their pain might be extreme when forced to obey the divine will. And how do we act when sense rebels against the will of God? Ah, my

God! how readily do I yield to its rebellions! I know that I ought to resist, but I do not. I take such jealous care of my reputation and health that when an occasion for mortification appears I am easily overcome by the fear of one thing or another's doing me some injury. This excessive tenderness springs from my sloth and overweening self-love. Then concupiscence begins to claim notice. And, as I never resolutely undertake to conquer, it generally happens that I am miserably defeated.

O my Jesus! Thou beholdest my unhappy weakness. Arm me, I implore Thee, with Thy strength with which Thou didst fight so valiantly in the garden. Thou hast merited this grace for me by Thy agony, and Thou knowest well that I shall never obey or serve Thee unless Thou dost make me strong by Thy help.

I shall resolve to combat my fear of dying soon, my apprehension of being ill, of being humbled, or despised. Moreover, I shall constrain myself to overcome the repugnances of my senses, in imitation of Jesus Christ.

III. To understand the causes whence arose the agony of Jesus Christ we must consider that His thoughts were the instruments that produced it. The fear of loss of life is naturally painful to all, but its anguish is aggravated when the light of reason assists the instinct of nature. Jesus Christ beholds with most vivid clearness the value of His own life, which is no ordinary life, but one which, by its union with the Divinity, is worthy of love, honor, and esteem beyond all the lives in the world. He knows that His corporal life is more precious than the life of the angels, because of the exceeding glory that it every moment renders to God. Although He knows that it is a great good to sacrifice it in order to deliver souls from sin, yet He also knows that His life is a greater good than is the evil of all the sins of the world. The heavens are not so far removed from the earth as His life is elevated above ours.

By how much the more, then, His life deserves to be loved, so much the greater is the ardor with which He loves



it, through motives natural and supernatural of the most sinless perfection. Wherefore, as He loves His own life with an exceeding love, He must experience a most intense sorrow at being obliged to deliver it into the hands of His enemies. It is this sorrow that brings Him to the brink of death, and on account of which any other man less strong than He would have infallibly died.

Behold, my soul, how dear thou art to Jesus Christ! His own life is dear, most dear to Him; but dearer to Him is thy salvation, since to save thee He accepts death. Behold, again, an example most worthy of being imitated by me in coöperating with my own salvation. Jesus Christ has a thousand motives to love and to preserve His most precious existence. Nevertheless, as it is the will of His Father that He should die to deliver me from eternal death, no motive can withhold Him from obedience. For the sake of obedience He reckons His life as nothing, as if it were the most worthless life in the world.

In like manner should we act. There is no reason that should have power to prevent our obeying God. Health may be precious, life may be precious, all that we have in the world may be precious, but still more precious must we consider obedience to the will of God. Have I, in times past, been guided by this maxim? No; and I am grieved to confess it, O my God! I humbly implore Thy grace that, for the future, Thy most holy will may at all costs be done by me. Were I to give my life for Thee I should give little more than nothing in proportion to what I owe Thee.

Spending and losing my life in the service of God should be the object not of my fears, but of my desires. How many persons in the world devote their lives to sin and worldly interest!

IV. To Jesus Christ it is a grievous affliction, for reasons that we have remarked, to be forced to lose His most precious life; but to aggravate this affliction, another consideration must be mentioned—His innocence. A malefactor about to suffer death is indeed troubled, as a man must be at the apprehension of death; but yet he



tranquillizes and consoles himself by what his conscience tells him—that death is justly due him for his crimes. Not so is it with an innocent person. So much the more reason has he to complain as he sees that his death is undeserved. From this viewpoint, how afflicting and grievous then must have been to Jesus the apprehension of death, considering His spotless innocence.

In fact, He knows that He has to die not for His own sins but for those of others, for whom He has voluntarily bound Himself as a surety to make satisfaction to the divine justice. But what consolation is there to be found in this? An actual debtor, when obliged to pay, makes up his mind to do so, saying to himself, *I incurred the debt; it is but fair that I should pay it.* But a surety finds it very hard to say, *Others have incurred the debt, and I must pay it.* Now this is precisely what increases the bitterness of the sorrow that Jesus naturally feels—that He has committed no sin, and is obliged to satisfy by His death for the sins of others. To make this reflection still more poignant, He views His death not as chosen by Himself through charity, but in the light of being owed by Him to the divine justice.

Contemplate, O my soul! thy Lord Jesus Christ prostrate on the earth, unable now to draw His breath, except at intervals, as do persons in their agony when death approaches. His sorrow is at the highest point, beyond which sorrow in this world can not go. If, then, nature itself cries out as wronged when sympathy is refused to a poor sufferer who is proved innocent of that for which he suffers, what must be said of me if I do not sympathize with my most innocent Saviour in the condition in which I now behold Him? He complains more than all of this, that there is no one to show Him any sympathy. How then is it that my soul is so insensible, my heart so hardened, that on an occasion of this kind I have not one tear nor one sigh of compassion? O Jesus! I implore Thee to pardon my ignorance, my insensibility, my ingratitude. Tenderness of heart is Thy gift which I may desire, but can not of myself possess. I

grieve that I have deserved, on account of my wickedness, to be deprived of this gift; and by way of sympathy with Thee I offer Thee those painful sighs that Thou didst breathe out for me in Thy most bitter Passion.

Since I can not imitate Jesus by suffering as an innocent victim, I shall strive to resemble Him somewhat by suffering as a penitent. I know that I have contracted debts, and I must pay for them as best I may.

V. What throws Jesus Christ into an agony is not so much the thought that He must die as that He must die upon a cross. This was a kind of death looked upon in those days as the most execrable and most to be dreaded of all deaths, as it was wont to be inflicted only upon the most notorious malefactors. A prince about to be beheaded by his enemies can summon up courage to undergo death becomingly; but if he has to be hanged on an infamous gibbet, the apprehension of this disgrace is, in the last degree, tormenting to him. Thus Jesus Christ has to make two immense efforts of violence to Himself. One, to resign Himself to death in obedience; the other, to the death of the cross. Now it is on account of these efforts to His Humanity to overcome the repugnances of sense that He is thrown into a mortal agony.

The Passion of Jesus Christ is voluntary, and what is willingly suffered is considered not to inflict so much pain. But is it true that a sick man, because he consents to be burned and cut, feels therefore less acutely the pain of the hot iron and of the knife? Jesus Christ suffers because He chooses to suffer. Yes. But His senses are not, on that account, benumbed. No; for the very reason that He chooses to suffer He suffers more, because He Himself excites His own apprehensions to the highest degree of intensity; He awakens His sense to feel His afflictions with the utmost acuteness; in order that His fortitude may be seen in the greatest possible perfection, as an example for us, and that the Redemption of mankind and the satisfaction made to the divine justice may be superabundant.

If I could probe Thy Heart, O my Saviour! methinks I

should see there portrayed in minute detail the whole of Thy Passion. The Jews had nothing to do with that portion of it that Thou didst suffer in Thy soul. It is I myself who here have more than all others to answer for on account of my manifold and grievous sins. In truth, it is I who have crucified Thee and caused these convulsions and this agony in Thy tender Heart. That Heart all on fire with love for me, and to which I owe an infinite debt of gratitude.

Most loving, most lovely Heart of Jesus! I beg pardon for my iniquities and I acknowledge that I am profoundly grieved for having contributed to the bitter agony of Thy soul;—I, who above all am bound to love Thee. Behold me now desirous to love Thee; and I do love Thee. If Thou dost wish that I should love Thee more, give me all that love which Thou dost desire me to have. I know not if my love amounts to what Thy commandment requires. Therefore, I implore Thy assistance to love Thee to such a degree that I may be obedient in all things to Thee until the end of my life. I know not of what disease, or what manner of death, I shall die. I resign myself to whatever kind of death it may be; and I shall pray to God for nothing but the favor of living and dying in His grace and in His love.

VI. All manner of evils entered into the world by the disobedience of Adam, and Jesus Christ desired by His obedience to repair them as far as possible. The most terrible of evils in the order of nature is death. It was not ordained by God, but came into the world on account of sin. Our agony, then, is to be overwhelmed with sorrow by reason of our sins; Jesus suffered an agony in the garden and voluntarily endured this affliction, which of necessity we must undergo. He did this, in the first place, that He might show us by His example how we also must overcome the fear of death by resignation to the will of God. Moreover, that He might merit for us in our agony a mitigation of the anguish that will accompany it, and in order to teach us that no kind of death, be it violent or natural, should affright us if we live as Christians ought to live.

Let us seriously reflect on the agony of Jesus Christ. In His person He represents to me that anguish, those terrors, that I shall also experience at the approach of death. In that last hour of my life nature within me will be convulsed and in disorder, because the tie that unites my spirit and my flesh is about to be broken, and my soul will be overwhelmed with fear at having shortly to appear before the tribunal of God and to enter on an eternity that will never change. What will then be my distress on feeling myself penetrated through and through by such a load of remorse for the past, and encompassed with such dangers for the future?

My soul, dost thou desire to find help and consolation in thy last conflict? Let us trust in the merits of Jesus Christ, and at the same time let us endeavor to follow His example. He anticipates that last agony which He is about to suffer on Calvary by a violent dread of it. Let us also anticipate and dread our last agony. Let us often think of it, let us imagine ourselves actually in our agony, and let us now produce the thoughts which we shall then have, in order that our last agony may not come upon us unawares, but may find us prepared. The agony of that man is an unhappy one on whom it comes without his having thought of it; but it will be a time of happiness for one who has prepared himself for the struggle.

O my Lord Jesus Christ! I pray Thee to awaken within me those thoughts that may be most profitable as a preparation for death. By the merits of Thy agony in the garden have pity on me, deliver me from an unprovided death—that is, from dying without being prepared for death. It matters not what manner of death it may be, if only it is not unprovided. What I have to fear is not death, but a bad death.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## JESUS CHRIST SWEATS BLOOD IN THE GARDEN.

I. OUR body is so constituted that it sweats whenever the heart is oppressed either by grievous fear or by any other violent emotion. Therefore, Jesus Christ having excited in His imagination a strong forecast of His approaching Passion and death, His Heart within His breast is contracted and oppressed with fear, dread and horror. His sensitive faculties would fain not suffer; but as His reason wills that He should suffer in obedience to God, the latter prevails in the conflict and His sensitiveness is crushed with extreme violence.

Hence, Jesus Christ in the garden sweats; and His sweat becomes blood, that issues from every pore of His body in place of ordinary sweat. Fear has driven His blood to the vicinity of His Heart; and that last effort which He makes to overcome His fear forces it back with such violence that it even trickles down upon the ground in large drops. This bloody sweat, then, is not an effect of timidity or weakness, but of the intrepid fortitude with which reason has vanquished the sensitive appetite. However, this extraordinary affection is not to be regarded as the result of natural causes, but simply of His own will. Jesus Christ wills that His Humanity should suffer to the full extent of what it is capable of suffering, and for this end He wills that it should suffer to the extent of sweating real blood.

O my soul! contemplate thy Lord bathed in His blood. This blood has not been drawn from His veins by dint of scourging, thorns and nails. No; it is blood which He Himself has forced from His Heart as an evidence of the violence of His immense love and of the reality of His interior grief. In this state thy most sorrowful Lord turns to thee and says, Behold, thou soul! has any one ever sweated blood as I have done? No, nor has any sorrow been like unto Mine.

O my sweet Jesus, how deeply do I compassionate Thee in Thy anguish, that needs must have been extreme to



cause the shedding of all this blood! I thank Thee for this blood, the first that Thou hast shed from Thy veins and which Thou hast shed and poured out as a plentiful Redemption for me. What shall I give Thee in return for Thy love? I confess that I am unworthy of it, but permit not, I beseech Thee, that I should ever be ungrateful for it. Give me grace to return Thee thanks in proportion to what I owe Thee for so loving and so painful a Passion. Engrave the thought of it on my unfeeling heart that I may remember it, in order to compassionate and to imitate it. Ah, my Jesus! who dost shed so much blood for me, incline my hard heart to shed a few tears for Thee.

After the example of Jesus Christ, I shall renounce all that is contrary to the divine Will. How have I hitherto resisted my passions? Oh, how far am I from sweating blood by doing violence to myself!

II. There were two most bitter ingredients in the chalice presented by the angel to Jesus Christ. One was composed of the evils of pain that He had to suffer in the Passion. The other of the evil of sin, for which He was to make satisfaction as surety to the divine justice for the entire human race. Therefore, we must be far from supposing that He sweats blood simply from the apprehension of those most tormenting pains which He foresees He is about to suffer. The cause is greater in an incomparable degree. It is the innumerable, most foul, and most grievous sins for which He is about to expiate and to make satisfaction, and for which, by the divine decree, satisfaction can not be made except by the shedding of His most precious blood. His sweating blood for the evil of pain arises from the act of resignation with which He forces His sensitive appetite to obedience. His sweating blood for the evil of sin is the effect of His interior sorrow, which purges away iniquity and satisfies the divine Majesty.

The blessed Jesus, finding Himself loaded with the sins of the whole world, experiences in His Heart such horror from the excessive hatred that He has for every offence against God that blood issues from every part of His body

so as to cover the ground. Sweat was given to man as a punishment for Adam's sin; and Jesus Christ, undergoing penance for sin, offers His sweat mingled with blood and tears to His Eternal Father. His sorrow reaches the highest possible point,—so that we may justly say that He weeps for our sins with tears of blood from as many eyes as there are pores in His body.

Consider attentively, my soul, how great an evil sin must be, since it is for sin that the Son of God made Man is in agony and sweats blood. O most tender Jesus! who art become all eyes to weep for my sins with such pain and bitterness, I implore Thee, by those drops of sweat which are so many tears of living blood, soften my hard heart that by reflecting on my sins, which are enormous both in number and kind, comprising every character of iniquity, I may shed some tears of compunction and contrition.

O my God! I am grieved for all the evil that I have done; and since I, also, on my part, must make satisfaction for it as far as I am able, what is the satisfaction that I shall offer to Thy justice? I know that Thou wilt never reject a contrite and humble heart; make, then, my heart contrite and humble, and what I shall thus have received from Thee as a gift I will offer to Thee as a sacrifice. I do not see how I can glorify Thee more than by contrition of heart. This, therefore, is what I ask as a grace from Thy infinite goodness, I myself being indeed possessed of every means to offend, but of none worthily to honor Thee.

I shall make frequent acts of contrition, uniting my feeble acts with the powerful acts of Jesus Christ, so that God may accept them in expiation for my sins.

III. It is highly calculated to excite our sorrow to take a general view of all the sins that we have committed throughout the whole course of our life; and the more perfectly we realize that the God whom we have offended is worthy of our infinite love, the more bitter will our sorrow be. What, then, must have been the sorrow of Jesus Christ in the garden, viewing Himself as He did, as guilty not only of all the sins of one individual man but of all

the sins of all men in the whole world? In proportion to the perfection in which He knows and loves God is the sorrow He feels for every offence against God. Hence, as His wisdom is supreme, so, also, is His sorrow supreme. Moreover, He grieves as much as He pleases, since it is at His own discretion to be sorry or not, and in the degree that He thinks fit and proper. Consequently, He desires to make satisfaction to the divine justice for all the sins of all men, which He has taken on Himself as though they were actually His own; we may be assured that the measure of His sorrow was in full proportion with the number of the sins.

If we sum up all the sorrow of contrition that all the penitents of the world have had, or will have, or ought to have, it would be very little in comparison with this most grievous sorrow of the Man-God. We read of persons who, on account of the displeasure their sins have caused them, have entered on a course of most severe penance. Of others who have died of a broken heart. Therefore, Jesus Christ would have died at any moment of this grief, which was incomparably heavier than theirs, if His Divinity had not, by a continued miracle, kept Him alive. His agony and His bloody sweat are evidences of how intense and violent was His sorrow.

Come, my soul, and inquire of Jesus the cause of this immense sadness that made Him sweat blood. Behold the ground on which He kneels, it is bedewed and wet with blood. At the very moment of His resigning Himself to shed His blood for us, He actually shed it; and it is undoubtedly true that it was all shed for me; but it is likewise certain that it will avail me nothing for the pardon of my sins if I do not also grieve for them. And yet, what do I feel in this respect?

O God! my affections are easily enough moved by the affairs of this world, but for the sins that I have committed against Thee how unfeeling and hard is my heart? Ah, my good Jesus! take from me, I beseech Thee, this heart, and give me another that will not in future be either joyful

or sad about vain matters, but which may yield itself only to the impressions of Thy love and may bitterly grieve for having offended Thee. Sometimes I imagine that I grieve for my faults, but my grief is but trifling. I wish it were great, for my sins are not small or few. I conjure Thee, by Thy most precious blood, to cause my grief to be at least of such a nature and so great that it may in the end become real and perfect contrition.

I shall often reflect on the sins of my life. I have little sorrow for them, because I have not a right conception of what sin is. In order, then, that my reflections on them may lead to grief I shall think of them in this light: *O how many, how many offences are they against God!*

IV. The grief that made Jesus Christ fall into an agony and sweat blood is beyond our full comprehension; but to form an inadequate idea of it we may say that what is done in the vintage is precisely the same as what took place mystically in the Garden of Gethsemani. The grape, after being gathered, is thrown into the vat and trodden upon; it is then put under press, and, the press being moved with violence, the fruit bursts and sends out its juice on every side.

Thus was the Heart of Jesus Christ like a cluster of grapes—most sweet, composed of His Divinity and innocent Humanity, but at the same time full of bitterness from the infinity of black, frightful objects that He had so vividly before Him. Our sins, also, were like a ponderous wine-press. That most tender Heart being then placed under such a weight, which the zeal of the divine justice violently trod, was so pressed and bruised that through vehemence of grief it discharged blood in all directions, and with such force that it issued from His head, His shoulders, His breast, His hands, His feet; in short, from all the pores of His body, and ran in torrents upon the ground.

O my soul! fix thy thoughts and affections on Thy suffering Saviour; gather up those precious drops of blood; compassionate and thank Him who suffers so much for Thee. Woe to thee if thy heart is not softened by so much blood, and such loving blood! But, good Jesus! who groanest



and art faint, who dost suffer and sweat beneath the load of my sins, apply Thy merits, I beseech Thee, to me that I may rid myself of the burden of all these sins. Sprinkle me with only one drop of Thy blood, for one drop is sufficient to purify, to sanctify, and to save me. For myself, I desire to imitate Thee by bruising my heart with contrition and by shedding some few tears of sorrow for my sins in return for the shedding of Thy blood. Ah, merciful Jesus! let Thy mercy be shown to me and let it comfort me.

Since, O Eternal Father! I have no means to satisfy Thee for my manifold sins, I offer Thee as a sacrifice of penance the most sweet, the most afflicted Heart of Thy only-begotten Son, Jesus; that Heart crushed with the fear of Its own sufferings, broken with sorrow for my sins. Wilt Thou refuse this offering? I am confident that Thou wilt not since it is the Heart of Thy beloved Son, and a broken and humble heart, to whomsoever it may belong, Thou wilt not despise.

It is true that, without a special grace from God, I can not grieve for my sins as I should; it is also true that I do not deserve this grace; but I shall ask it with confidence, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

V. In a holocaust of the Old Law the entire victim was burnt and offered up, and God accepted it for an odor of sweetness inasmuch as it was a figure of Jesus Christ. Now we have to contemplate the accomplishment of this figure. Jesus Christ in the garden sacrifices and offers Himself unreservedly, whole and entire, to the divine Majesty, since He suffers in His body, which is in an agony and bathed in blood. He suffers in the rational part of His soul, that is, in His will, which grieves beneath the almost infinite load of sins. What portion of His body or what power of His soul is there that is not afflicted with most excruciating suffering, or which He does not immolate as a perfect holocaust?

It is the malice of our will that causes sin when our will is opposed to the divine Will. Therefore, sin can not be destroyed except by a contrary act of the same will grieving



for the offence against God. This is what Jesus Christ did throughout His life. And He does it with striking earnestness of intention in the garden, exerting His will to grieve for all our offences against God, with acts so intense and ardent that on account of their excessive vehemence He begins to sweat blood.

Whatever portion of the sufferings of Jesus Christ we select for meditation, whether exterior or interior pains, we must form our idea of them as most grievous, surpassing all pains that can be undergone in this present life. But we must meditate principally on the sorrow that He had for our sins, because we should imitate it. We may, perhaps, plead an excuse if at times we fail to imitate Our Saviour in some of His other pains; but we are strictly obliged to imitate Him in the sorrow of His will, with our will penitent and afflicted above all other causes of sorrow for every offence that we have committed against God.

Here then, behold my will which I offer to Thee, O my God! This is the guilty wretch that has had power to sin, but without Thy assistance is incapable of grieving as it ought for its sins. I offer it to Thee, such as it is; a sinful will that desires to become penitent; a will that having been rebellious and ungrateful to Thee now desires to love Thee. I implore Thee not to reject it. Vouchsafe to accept it, and by Thy mercy to strengthen it in its good desires and comfort it. I wish this will of mine no longer to belong to me, but to be altogether Thine; so that it may obey Thee perfectly in everything and may never more resist Thee. I have nothing more precious or more agreeable to offer Thee, and this I offer Thee with my whole heart, without reserve.

Corporal penance, performed according to one's ability, is commendable. But the penance of the will, which consists in sorrow for sin, is indispensable. Therefore, throughout the whole course of my life I shall be mindful of this.

VI. If we inquire the cause why the will of God was so excessively tormented by the displeasure and detestation that it experienced for our sins, one cause, and this the

principal, was because His will was possessed with immense love for God and zeal for His glory. In order that the Humanity of Jesus Christ might be a perfect holocaust of expiation for our sins His soul had to be immolated and burned. And if we would understand how this sacrifice was accomplished we may suppose that, this soul having been created by God on purpose that it might love God in an unspeakable degree, the love of God was the arrow that pierced it and the fire that consumed it; and that in proportion to the intensity of its love to God, which was extreme, was also the excess and intensity of its sorrow and contrition for the offences of men against God.

The love of God assuaged the pains of the martyrs. The same love of God increases those of Jesus Christ;—and how is this? Jesus Christ with His mind's eye beholds an innumerable host of sinners arming themselves to fight against God. They employ all their wickedness and force to cast God down from His throne; and, were it possible, to make God no longer God. Hence it is, that as He loves God with all the intensity of which a soul hypostatically united to Him is capable, beholding this same most lovely God so greatly contemned and outraged by the meanest, most ungrateful of His creatures, He conceives so immense a sorrow for it, proportioned to the exceeding greatness of His love, that He must swoon, fall into an agony, and sweat blood.

From these sublime and true reflections I may infer the reason that I have so little, so very little, sorrow for my sins. It is simply because, in my heart, there is little, very little, love for God. The fact is, O my God! I do not love Thee, and for this reason I do not grieve for having offended Thee. Who but Thou can give me this love, which is a simple, gratuitous gift of Thine? I desire to love Thee on account of the desire and obligation that I have to grieve for my wickedness and for not having hitherto loved Thee, and for having, on the contrary, so grievously offended Thee. Ah, my God! when shall my desires be made practical? When shall I offer to Thee in sincerity, once for all, my whole being? This work should no longer

be delayed. No; I am already far too dilatory in resolving upon it. I now ask the grace, O Eternal Father! to accomplish it. I ask it through that which is of all things the most dear to Thee,—that is, by the reciprocal love with which Thou lovest Jesus and Jesus loves Thee.

I shall try to discover in myself the reason why I do not love God; and as I shall find that it is because I love creatures too ardently, I shall detach myself especially from those that are prejudicial to me and place an obstacle to my love of God.

VII. Whoever loves God loves also everything that God loves. Consequently, as God has a great love for our souls, since they were created by Him after His own image, Jesus Christ also has an exceeding love for them. The reason that He came down from heaven upon earth was solely that He might redeem souls from eternal death. For this reason alone He toiled through the whole course of His life. Now He is prepared for suffering and death simply to fulfil this His one and only work, the salvation of souls.

Therefore, as He beholds a countless multitude of souls of all the tribes of Gentiles, but more particularly so many Jews, who were His brethren according to the flesh, and so many Christians, much more His brethren by grace, who would not profit by His Passion and in spite of it would be eternally damned, who can express the immensity of His grief in compassionating them? Its greatness must have been proportioned to His charity toward the multitude of souls that He foresaw would be lost by their sins, and to the excess of the pains of hell to which they would expose themselves.

St. Paul was so grieved on account of his compassion for certain Israelites who were in a state of perdition, that he longed to save them even at the cost of his own soul, if this had been permitted without sin. A similar example of zeal we read of in Moses. What, then, were the feelings of Jesus, whose charity for souls was without a parallel, immense? This is the grief that overwhelms Him, casts Him to the ground and makes Him sweat blood.

Ah, my most sweet Saviour! shall I elect to be one of those who will be lost because they will not reap any fruit from Thy merits? Certainly not. This shall never be. I now realize how precious my soul was in Thy eyes. It shall also be precious to me; at all costs I shall save it. I am sorry for having so frequently run the risk of damning it eternally by my sins. I shall never again do the like. That Thou shouldst have sweat blood to satisfy for my sins, from one viewpoint distresses, but in another it consoles me; and I thank Thee since there was no other remedy for me. But that Thou shouldst have sweat blood from a sentiment of compassion for my damnation, this, no! I will not agree to; and I pray Thee, by Thy blood, never to permit me to be damned. As I now return thanks to Thee for the shedding of this blood, so I hope to do the same for endless ages in heaven.

For the salvation of my soul Jesus Christ spared neither toils, nor tears, nor sweat, nor blood. And I, what do I do for my salvation? What am I resolved to do?

VIII. For the same reason that Jesus Christ shed tears over Jerusalem, He now also sheds His blood in the garden; the thoughts that fill His mind cause an excessive aggravation of His sufferings. He realizes that He must die for all in order that all may be saved; but, at the same time, He sees that through their own fault all will not be saved; nay, that His death will be to many foolishness and a scandal, and will make them more culpable and deserving of greater punishment in hell. What a torment is this to His most loving Heart? To die for the elect, for His dear friends, is sweet and agreeable to Him. But that He must die for all, and that of these all many will be reprobates and His eternal enemies;—this is to Him a source of anguish beyond measure.

The Saviour of the world wishes, as far as in Him lies, that all should be saved; but in conformity to the Father's eternal decree He does not wish that any should be saved who will not be saved, or would be saved by force. Whoever is saved must have a desire to be saved. Jesus Christ,



therefore, perceiving that not all have this good will, and that many, on the contrary, have a wicked, perverse will, is excessively grieved on this account, so as to faint, to be agitated, and to sweat blood, because His charity desires that no one should be damned. The angel would comfort Him, but He is not now concerned about the angels, this loving Shepherd, who has left the heavenly court and has come down on earth to seek the lost sheep. He seeks souls. And oh! if Judas or any other great sinner would but humble himself and repent,—this would indeed be sufficient to turn His sorrow into joy by reason of the delight that His love would experience.

But, my most afflicted Redeemer! if one sinful soul is able to console Thee, behold my soul, sinful in truth, capable of as much wickedness as any in the world. I am precisely one of those that have not the will to be saved, because, being entangled by evil passions, they have not the will to amend. But I now retract all the acts of my will in which I have heretofore so long persisted. I am grieved over all my sins for this reason alone—that they are offences against Thee, the sovereign Good, who art infinitely worthy of being loved. I am determined to be saved, and in order that I may be saved I am resolved to amend. Do Thou, O my God! I beseech Thee, make my resolution efficacious and constant by Thy most holy grace. Enlighten me that I may know in what I should principally amend, and assist me by Thy powerful grace truly to effect my conversion.

I shall examine what manner of resolution I have made in regard to my eternal salvation, for he is not actually resolved to be saved who does not make use of the proper means, which are to shun vice and to acquire virtue.

IX. Charity, which means love, love of God and love for souls, may be said in a general way to have caused the agony and bloody sweat of Jesus Christ in the garden. It is this charity which, like a fire intensely hot, melts His Heart and convulses Him with that vehement desire to suffer and to satisfy the Eternal Father for us. He desires to shed His blood far more than His enemies desire it; and, if the



fear of His Passion afflicts Him in the inferior part of His soul, much more is He afflicted in the superior part by the delay of this same Passion for which He so ardently longs. To Him it is a passion that His Passion is delayed. He feels as though He were dying from the desire of dying actually for us.

All this had been foretold by Himself when He called His Passion a Baptism, to intimate that He was to be deluged in His own blood, and when He spoke of the intolerable anguish caused by His charity, to which hours appeared as years as He was waiting for the time of His Passion for which He so earnestly sighed. Our understanding can form no idea of the immensity of this His sorrow, because it can form no idea of the immensity of His love. It is in truth this love that forces Him to sweat blood, for it can not brook that the Redemption of our souls should be delayed even for a single moment. Behold, my soul! the anguish into which the Heart of Thy most loving Saviour is thrown on thy account.

But how ungratefully, O my Jesus, is Thy love responded to! All the pores of Thy body are so many mouths that call out to my heart to love Thee in return for having loved me so much as to shed Thy blood for love. With the eyes of faith I see how much love has made Thee do for me, and how much do I love Thee in return? What do I do for Thee?

When I consider how active is the love with which worldlings cease not to labor to acquire riches, honors, and fleeting pleasures; and reflect, on the other hand, how little, what a mere nothing, is the love that I have for Thee; how little, what a nothing it is that I do for Thee, as I have not resolution to mortify myself in anything, what shame and confusion is all this to me! O my God! who givest me light to know my obligations, strengthen me also to fulfil them perfectly. Thou hast merited for me the grace to love Thee. Therefore, refuse me not that which is due to Thy merits. Let Thy love enter into me and oblige me to think

no more of anything but of Thee, to imitate Thee, and to please Thee by the constant acquisition of virtue.

I grieve for having so little love for Jesus Christ, and I shall not flatter myself with the idea that I love Him so long as I do not earnestly endeavor to imitate Him. Fraternal charity, founded on humility, is the virtue of His predilection.

X. A great fire will burn the more brightly in proportion to the strength with which the wind blows; thus it is exactly with the charity of Jesus Christ, which only grows the stronger the more it is contradicted by the ingratitude of men, which the holy Fathers call a blighting wind that dries up the springs of the divine mercy. The sins that will yet be committed, and the sinners who will yet go to hell in spite of His Passion, crowd upon His thoughts; but His charity, instead of being quenched on this account, only breathes out a brighter flame. Reason and sense would cause Him to grudge the endurance of a Passion which to so many will, through their own fault, be rendered unavailing, and this conflict of feelings forces the blood to fall from Him in large drops. However, His charity, far from being cooled, burns the more and melts His Heart as wax is melted at the fire. In this conflict of His charity against the ingratitude of man, Jesus Christ sees that He Himself, who now, as a most compassionate Redeemer, is about to suffer for the salvation of souls, shall one day, as a most just Judge, have to condemn a vast number of sinful souls redeemed by Him. He sees in the garden that sentence of eternal malediction which He will pronounce against them on the Day of Judgment. Yes; He sees it most vividly in all its circumstances, as if He had that very moment to pronounce it. What a torment, good God, was this to Thy charity! Yet it does not extinguish it. On the contrary, it inflames it the more. So He does not wait for the ruffians to vent their cruelty upon Him; He forestalls them and gives evidence, by streams of blood from every part of His body, that His charity far exceeds their cruelty.

Recall now to mind, my soul, the treason of Judas, who

sold Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Then contemplate that most precious blood which the Incarnate Son of God spontaneously sheds in such abundance for the Redemption of mankind, and cry out in amazement: Oh, how miserable is the price for which a man sells God! Oh, how munificent the price for which God buys man!

Moreover, I shall reflect that the Saviour has charitably applied to my benefit His bloody sweat in order to obtain for me the grace of pardon and the flight of sin. How have I hitherto availed myself of this blood? How have I coöperated with His merits by penance? O my Jesus! I hear Thy voice, I hear Thee complain, with the Prophet, that I have in the past made Thy love and Thy blood of no benefit to myself. Alas! Thou hast good reason to complain. I also lament. Let me not, I beseech Thee, continue to be the ungrateful wretch that I have been.

I shall retain in my memory this Man-God in agony; I shall remember that He will come in majesty as Judge, to condemn those who have rejected His mercy by refusing to be converted with all their heart to God. Oh, then, let us now at last be truly converted!

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### TWO MYSTERIES IN THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE GARDEN.

I. BEFORE leaving the consideration of the Passion which Jesus Christ endured in the garden, we must not fail to observe that nothing of all that took place in that garden was ruled by accident. The Saviour was pleased for our sake to choose this place by deliberate counsel of His providence. The Garden of Gethsemani, in which He suffered sadness, fears, swooning, heaviness, and a bloody sweat—in which He was also apprehended by His enemies, to be led to death,—is situated at the foot of Mount Olivet, the foot of the same mountain from which He afterward as-

cended, there leaving the print of His footsteps when, according to the words of the Prophet, He went up triumphantly to heaven.

Therefore, Jesus Christ having suffered on Mount Olivet, and having also from the same place ascended to eternal glory, we may learn that the way to heaven is the way of suffering. Jesus Christ had to walk by this way. By the same way we also must walk after Him. We can not have delights both in this world and in the other. We must renounce either the vain pleasures of this world or the eternal pleasures of the next. The most infallible mark of our predestination is the imitation of the sacred Passion. It is certain that if now we are partakers with Jesus in His patience, we shall hereafter be partakers with Him in eternal glory.

How sweet, O my soul, ought suffering be to thee, if it were only that we thereby keep Jesus company in His dolorous Passion! But how far more dear should suffering be to thee, since by means of it thou canst in the end keep Him company in eternal bliss! However great may be our sufferings in this world, they all are little or nothing in comparison either with what Jesus has suffered or with what is gained by the merits of Jesus in heaven. This world, also, has its garden of apparent delight, but of real shame and which conducts to eternal pains;—the reverse of the Garden of Olives, whence they who suffer with Jesus ascend with Him to everlasting joys. My soul, let us gladly take our place in this garden where Jesus suffered. Vanities, pleasures, pastimes of the world, I renounce you; and I pray Thee, my Jesus! to give me a disgust for them all. Mortifications, abnegation of the senses and of my own will, I love you; and I implore Thee, O Jesus! to make me love ever more and more all that which Thou hast loved. Lead me often into this garden to gather a little bundle of myrrh, since I have abundant occasions of suffering, if in no other way, at least by resisting my corrupt passions. This garden is the one of my choice that I may there weep

for my sins, where Thou, in the days of Thy flesh, didst shed so many tears for me.

When nature within me feels repugnance and disgust for a devout life, I shall raise up the eyes of my faith to behold that eternal Paradise where Jesus Christ awaits me, and hope will sweeten all my bitterness.

II. Another remarkable circumstance to be considered is, that near the Garden of Gethsemani, where runs the torrent of Cedron, is the Valley of Josaphat, where, according to the Prophetic oracles, the General Judgment of the whole world will take place. It can not be without mystery that the Last Judgment should be held near the identical spot in which Jesus Christ shed His blood for us: since an account will be demanded of every drop of that blood, and with it shall be written the sentence of salvation of the elect and of damnation of the reprobate.

He who came once as Saviour shall come again in majesty as Judge; and for a public testimony of the charity He has had for souls, He will reveal in its entirety all that which is now unknown and can not be understood of His most bitter Passion. He will then call Heaven and earth to witness, and leave it to all creatures to say, if He could have done more for the salvation of souls. He will interrogate the consciences of men. He will ask how they have profited by the Sacraments, by indulgences, sermons, inspirations, and the abundance of other graces that flow from the plentiful Redemption that He has accomplished for us. He will cause it to be seen how, without being in any way bound, He has satisfied by His blood for our debts; and as it shall appear how much we were bound to correspond and coöperate with His merits, our enormous ingratitude will be contrasted with His immense mercy. Consequently, His holy Passion will cover the faces of the reprobate with confusion.

Look up, my soul, and reflect what will be thy case in that tremendous judgment. What wilt thou say? What wilt thou answer, when God asks of thee a detailed account of all His mercies in thy behalf? Now, in the



Garden of Gethsemani, the mercy of the Saviour invites and waits for thee, offering thee nothing but favor. Woe to thee if thou dost refuse it! Woe to thee if thou dost despise it! For it is this mercy that will give terror to His judgment in the Valley of Josaphat.

Ah, no, my Jesus! I shall not refuse Thy mercy. No, it is that mercy I implore. Oh, let that mercy overshadow me. Let me know what it demands of me, and with the assistance of Thy grace I pledge myself to be no longer rebellious to the good pleasure of Thy mercy. Let Thy mercy come to pardon the sins I have committed, and to safeguard me from committing them again. I trust in Thy mercy, which is favorably disposed to me; and as I now yield myself to its guidance I implore Thee. O my Saviour! in the Day of Judgment that Thou wilt save me from the rigors of the same mercy, which will then be most terrible.

In meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ I shall frequently recollect the judgment. And to reap more fruit from the consideration, I shall remember that I shall have to render a strict account of every drop of His most precious blood.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### JESUS CHRIST IN THE GARDEN GOES FORTH TO MEET HIS ENEMIES.

I. WHILE Jesus Christ is praying and suffering in the garden, Judas having warned the Jews that this night is a convenient time to take Him without noise, a troop of guards and others are quickly called together. Arms, staves, and lanterns are made ready, and they set out on the way to Gethsemani, led on by Judas, who knows that, according to His custom, his divine Master will be found there.

II. The Jews approach the garden, filled with hatred, envy, and rage against Jesus Christ, longing to lay their

hands on Him and make Him their prisoner. Jesus Christ, on His part, approaches them; loving, amiable, gentle, longing to be taken by them. We might doubt which of the two was the greater, the desire of Jesus Christ to give Himself up to His enemies or their desire to seize Him—if we did not know, or did not understand, how immense is the charity of Jesus, moving Him on the one hand to obey the will of God, and on the other to accomplish the Redemption of the world. But, O charity of Jesus, how much greater art thou than the malice of Judas!

Let us contemplate, on the one side, the Jews exasperated with rage; on the other, Jesus going to meet them with a willing Heart and cheerful aspect. He is the first to speak, as though He were about to hear some joyful news or to receive a rich present from them. Once He fled, when they were thinking of making Him king. Now, that they are coming to bind Him and lead Him away to death, He does not flee. Humility then was the cause of His flight. It is charity now that restrains Him. Charity which gives Him courage; charity which moves and presses Him on to meet torments and outrages. He is anxious that this should be made manifest. Therefore, when He sees the Apostles overcome with fear, He acts in a manner to make it evident to all that if He surrenders it is not through necessity, but by His own spontaneous will, resigned to the decrees of God.

Oh, if there was in my heart the slightest love of God how different would be the tenor of my life! Whoever loves God truly suffers willingly at all times; suffering does not appear to him to be suffering. Since I am then so averse to suffering, that instead of desiring and seeking it as Jesus Christ did I avoid it as much as possible, I ought to fear that I only imagine that I love God, while in reality I do not love Him. The love of God is always active, never idle. And what do I do for the love of God? We can not believe that the love of God dwells where works of the love of God are not manifest.

Have pity, O my Jesus! on this poor sinner who has lived

so long without the love of God. For love of Thy most sweet love, which caused Thee to surrender Thyself into the hands of sinners, inflame me with this same love, so that I may love and desire and seek at all times, in every thing, perfectly to accomplish the will of God.

To love God I should be disposed to do His will in all things, but to do His will I must deny myself. In what, then, am I prepared to deny my own will in order that I may do the will of God?

III. Judas is well aware that Jesus Christ can not be apprehended unless He chooses; and yet, blinded by his own wickedness, He procures a troop of armed men, thinking to take Him by force. With this troop, led on by Judas, go also many of the priests and Pharisees (Luke xxii, 52.); for as they had before now, at different times, endeavored to take Him and failed in the attempt, probably they have no confidence in the traitor and think it best to go in person so as to make sure, this time at least, of getting Him into their hands.

They flatter themselves that He will not now escape, and they make game of Him for saying that He is God. Jesus beholds their wicked thoughts and soon confounds them. For, having asked them whom they seek, and they having answered, Jesus of Nazareth, He adds but these few words, *I am He*:<sup>1</sup> when, in an instant, all of them, thrown back by an invisible power, fall like dead men to the ground. He calls down no angels from heaven to defend Him; His voice alone is sufficient to declare that He is God.

Such was at all times His conduct, to prove that He was Man to those who did not regard Him as Man, and to prove Himself God to those who did not believe Him to be God. Therefore, after showing Himself to the Apostles as true Man by the sadness He suffered, He shows Himself to them also as true God by giving to His human voice a divine virtue, by which His enemies are terrified and thrown to the ground. As Man, He asks whom they seek, as though

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xviii, 5.

He knew it not; as God, He casts them to the ground with one stroke of His omnipotence.

O Jesus of Nazareth, Man-God, how lovely art Thou and how terrible! How well Thou knowest how to make those fear Thee who refuse to love Thee! These words, *I am He*,<sup>1</sup>—that is, Jesus, which means Saviour,—are truly words of joy to those that love Thee and words of terror to those that seek to offend Thee. Behold, then, my soul which desires to love Thee. Say to it, *I am He*, thy Saviour; and this will be enough to fill it with comfort and joy. But within me there is a host of wicked passions: pride, anger, envy, sloth, luxury, and many more,—all conspiring against Thee. Say, then, also to them, *I am He*; and vanquish them, so that they may never again dare raise their head against Thee. This, in short, O my Saviour! is what I ask of Thee. Make me fear Thee so that I may not offend Thee, and make me love Thee with my whole heart that I may give Thee pleasure.

The desire to love God avails but little so long as we permit our passions to have full sway. Let us mortify them and remain in the purgative way, without longing so ardently to enter on the illuminative and unitive ways.

IV. Jesus Christ, having thus overcome His enemies, asks them once more whom they seek; thereupon they all rise up, full of bitterness and rage as before. Meanwhile, He has given them a proof that they would have no power over Him if He did not permit it; and it is a consolation to the Apostles, throughout the Passion, to know that He could never suffer or die against His own will. We must not proceed further without making a most profitable reflection.

If Jesus Christ, by the mere sound of His voice, cast to the ground the multitude of those who were coming with rage to apprehend Him, Jews and Gentiles together, though He was all the time disposed to let them take Him, to be judged and condemned, with what terror and consternation do we suppose His voice will be accompanied when He shall

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xviii, 5.



come to judge the world? If, I repeat, Jesus Christ was so terrible to sinners in His humility, what shall He be on the Day of Judgment, when He will appear in majesty? Oh, how the hearts of sinners will tremble in their breasts when they shall see coming as their Judge Him whom they have so greatly offended! More frightful than a thunderbolt will be the words that He shall say, *Depart from Me, you cursed*,<sup>1</sup> and with which He shall immediately plunge them into hell.

I, too, shall form one of that general assemblage; and what then shall become of me, O my God? If Thy mercy does not at present assist me, I do not see how I can safeguard myself on that last day of Thy most righteous wrath. My sins are excessive and I have deserved Thy eternal curse times innumerable. If the Day of Judgment were now at hand what should I say? What should I do, as there is scarcely a vice of which my conscience does not accuse me? Mercy, O Lord, my God! I confess that I deserve a thousand deaths,—I deserve that death which is eternal, and in myself I find nothing but matter for terror and despair. Jesus, divine Saviour, how much I owe to Thy most tender mercy! It is this which greatly sustains my heart, this makes me hope and encourages me to ask of Thee eternal life. I ask pardon for my sins and the life of Thy grace; I ask Thee also for the life of Thy glory, that I may love and bless Thee now and for ages and ages to come. Amen.

On the Day of Judgment it shall be known who is this Man-God who bringeth down the proud and exalteth the humble. Therefore, I shall endeavor to be humble and adore Him with fear.

## CHAPTER XXIV:

### JESUS CHRIST RECEIVES THE KISS FROM JUDAS.

I. JUDAS had said to the multitude that was with him: *Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He, hold Him fast.*<sup>2</sup> At

(1) St. Matt. xxv, 41. (2) St. Matt. xxvi, 48.



the same time he had warned them to take the greatest care in binding Jesus, and to lead Him away with all possible caution lest He should escape. According to the appointed signal, the traitor goes in advance of them all and approaches Jesus Christ to give Him the kiss.

Take a glance, O my soul, at Judas. Behold this audacious hypocrite, with a bright and cheerful countenance, lest he should betray his insidious purpose, go forward to meet his divine Master and to deliver Him with a token of peace into the hands of His enemies. The Prophet had already foretold that the Messiah was to be betrayed with this sign. But we must reflect again. Only a few moments before had Judas fallen to the ground with the others at those words of the Saviour, *I am He*. He must, at the time, have been confounded and terrified at that stroke of Omnipotence; and should he not have been impressed with some slight fear of God, and have opened the eyes of his mind, and repented? If, in the very act of preparing to commit a sin, I felt myself thrown on the ground by an invisible hand, I fancy that my courage would fail me for the wicked act and that I should refrain from it. However, not the slightest change takes place in Judas. He immediately recovers himself and is as wicked as ever. Oh, what a spectacle is this!

Yet, we need not marvel at him. Judas is under the dominion of avarice, he has betrayed his Lord for money; and now he longs to have in his hands the price of his treachery, covenanted to be paid him on his fulfilment of his part; and he has come to such a pass as to make a kiss—the mark of love—the instrument of the greatest of all possible crimes. What will not a predominant passion bring us to? It blinds, it hardens, it renders powerless the most urgent motives for conversion. If any one had told Judas, in the first period of his Apostleship, that he would one day be so perverted by covetousness as to harden his heart against the voice of mercy and the wonders of Omnipotence, he would not have believed it. Yet what

then would have seemed to him incredible afterward proved to be true.

If some one should tell me the same of myself, I would not believe it. And yet, O my God! who knows how soon some trifling passion may take hold on me and, gaining strength, may grow to be wholly ungovernable? I have within me the seed of every vice and the inclination to every vice, and innate malice fully capable of hurrying me to extremity. O Lord! keep Thy hand over me, I beseech Thee; for besides Thee there is none who can restrain and preserve me. Thou, and Thou alone, art my strength. In Thee I place my trust.

God has promised me His help. But I must examine myself to discover my predominant passion, that I may, by indefatigable violence, control and overcome it.

II. Judas approaches Our Saviour, and before giving Him the kiss salutes Him by saying, *Hail, Rabbi!*<sup>1</sup> Could there be a worse hypocrite?—a veritable wolf in sheep's clothing, who seeks to scatter the flock by laying snares for the Master. He gives Jesus Christ a salutation of love while cherishing implacable hatred toward Him. He wishes Him health, and comes to carry Him off to death. He calls Him *Rabbi*, and tramples under foot His holy instructions. The false wretch thinks he has to deal with a mere man, who does not see through his artifices. He flatters Himself that he can deceive Him with the semblance of friendship while he stretches forth his hands and draws near to give Him that kiss.

Behold the charity of Jesus! He does not shrink from this cruel wild beast that assails Him. He answers this liar with affectionate simplicity. He calls him by his name with a voice expressive of tender sorrow. *Judas*, He says, *dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?*<sup>2</sup> By His humility and gentleness He declares Himself Man, and, at the same time, allows him to see that He is God by revealing to him his secret, treacherous intention in that kiss. Why does He give an answer so courteous, so sweet, to one

(1) St. Matt. xxvi, 49.

(2) St. Luke xxii, 48.

who is deserving of the utmost severity? It was that Judas might understand the charity and patience with which his repentance was even now expected, and that in this manner his obstinate heart might be softened. But Judas persists in his obduracy in spite of all. O wretch, pitiable indeed, and yet deserving of no pity!

In Judas I see a true portraiture of myself. Ah, my Jesus! I, too, call Thee Master; but I do not conduct myself as Thy disciple ought to do. Is not this hypocritical affectation by which the tongue says one thing and the heart another? Nevertheless, O tender goodness of my God! how often, when I fall into an occasion of sin and am tempted and inclined to commit it, Thou callest me by my name with a gentle voice and Thou sayest to me interiorly, as Thou didst to Judas, *Dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?*<sup>1</sup> Sweet, loving voice! yet I ungratefully and obstinately turn a deaf ear. O Jesus, my Redemption! I deserve that Thou also shouldst be deaf to me when in my necessity I call on Thee for help; but Thy mercy is infinite and I shall not despair. I now implore Thee, with the innermost voice of my heart, to remove from me all my wickedness and fill me with Thy grace. Make me hear Thy voice, and soften my hard heart that I may obey it, so that Thy love may no longer be betrayed by me.

I shall repent of my ingratitude in not corresponding with so many loving inspirations of God, and when in danger of falling into sin I shall hearken to Jesus Christ saying to me what He said to Judas, *Dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?*

III. Judas, coming near to Jesus Christ, throws his arms around His neck; he presses Him to his breast and gives Him a kiss on the face. And what does Jesus Christ say? What does He do? How does He behave toward this worthless wretch, who has the effrontery to make use of a kiss—the token of love—as a signal of malignity such as has never been heard of, to break that peace which he had sworn when he became an Apostle? O innocent Lamb of

(1) St. Luke xxii, 48.

God! how canst Thou permit Thyself to be approached, to be embraced by this infernal wolf?

Meanwhile, Jesus Christ is aware of all that is done, said, and thought against Him. Therefore, when He sees with His mind's eye that Judas is near at hand, He rises from prayer; He awakens the Apostles, who were still sleeping; He warns them of the danger, encourages and animates them for the conflict. He does not retire, nor hide Himself, nor fly; but He divests Himself of the fear which a short time before caused Him to tremble and be troubled. He goes forth, bold and intrepid, to face His enemies.

Let us stop to marvel at this, but let us also learn a lesson from it. Jesus Christ had recommended to His Apostles to pray, that they might obtain courage to undergo the approaching trial. Now He allows these same Apostles, and us with them, to behold by His example how powerful a means prayer is for subduing the passions, for driving away melancholy, for strengthening the spirit to obey the divine Will. He had come into the garden filled with sadness at the prospect of His Passion and death. In the garden He prayed three times, and after His prayer see with what tranquil constancy He goes to meet all that had previously been the subject of His fears.

O my Lord God, how truly is Thy doctrine confirmed by Thy example—that prayer is a most efficacious remedy for all my necessities! But how, then, is it that after prayer I find myself as weak as I was before, as ready to yield to my passions and to sink under temptations? I can account for this only by concluding that I do not pray as I ought, and that my heart, in prayer, is more occupied with vanity than with God. And what profit do I gain by appearing before Thee with my body present but my spirit absent? O my Jesus! assist me by Thy grace; inspire, excite, help my wretched spirit to say the few prayers that I do say with the fervor and feeling with which Thou art pleased they should be said; not only applying my understanding to the meditation of Thy mysteries, but forming, moreover, such affections on them as correspond to my necessities.



When I have to conquer my repugnances and to mortify myself, I shall say to the powers of my soul what Jesus said to the Apostles: *Why sleep you? arise, pray, lest you enter into temptation.*<sup>1</sup>

Angels of Heaven! come now and admire the goodness, the charity, the sweetness of Jesus Christ. He does not withdraw His divine face from that mouth so full of cursing and bitterness, that might well have disgusted even the devils. He does not refuse that kiss, but He receives it with the utmost serenity. He shows Himself peaceable toward him who, on his side, obstinately refuses to have anything to do with peace. With patience truly divine He bears with Judas even at this late hour, and in the very moment of his executing his treachery He calls him, He invites him to conversion,—but in vain. The Saviour knows that this impious man will not be converted. Yet He is not wanting on His part. He superabounds with care, and with profound wisdom He bears with the traitor in order fully to accomplish His work as Saviour.

And what fruit ought we, my soul, to gather from this? Let us think no more of Judas, but leave him to his perverseness, and admiring the clemency and goodness of Jesus Christ, let us entertain this grateful and consoling thought: If He was content to be kissed by an apostate, by a sacrilegious, obstinate hypocrite, who came with poison on his lips to betray Him with a kiss, how much more will He not refuse the kiss of one who approaches Him in a penitential spirit, with the desire to love and obey Him?

O my God! who in Thy Incarnation didst vouchsafe to give a kiss to my human nature with Thy Divinity, let not my unworthiness, I beseech Thee, make Thee reject my ardent desires. O Jesus, my loving Saviour! in spirit I give Thee a thousand kisses, and with every kiss I offer Thee my heart. I have given Thee many a treacherous kiss. I repent; and now I kiss Thee with humility, as a penitent, trusting to Thy mercy for pardon, assistance, and salvation. So be it.

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke xxii, 46.



I shall make frequent use of ejaculatory prayers, which are so many affectionate movements and kisses of the heart. How many kisses of love I can give Jesus in Holy Communion! May each kiss be pure and fervent.

IV. Judas having saluted Jesus Christ with the name of *Rabbi*, Jesus Christ courteously returns the salutation to Judas, calling him *friend*. Hence it is not unlikely, considering His boundless charity, that He also returned him the kiss, to touch him with compunction by this loving act. But how different was the kiss of the traitor from that given in return by the Saviour! Judas, by his kiss, intended the death of Jesus. Jesus, by His kiss, intends to give life to Judas. Jesus Christ accepts His death, signified to Him by the kiss of Judas. Judas refuses to accept life offered him in the kiss of Jesus Christ. Oh, the clemency of Jesus! Oh, the obduracy of Judas!

Let us reflect again on this salutation, the last effort of the zeal and benevolence by which Jesus Christ endeavored to oblige Judas to be converted. *Friend*, says He, *whereto art thou come?*<sup>1</sup> O unspeakable mercy! He calls him *friend*, by this giving him sufficient assurance of His love. By this word *friend* He warns Him that it is an evil thing for him to be an enemy of God, and offers him pardon and a renewal of His friendship if he will accept it on the sole condition of being sorry for having offended Him. Yet, after all the evidences given to him of the love of the Incarnate Son of God, Judas, more savage than a wild beast, does not think of yielding. The supreme equity, meanwhile, of the justice of God and the iniquity of Judas are both amply demonstrated.

My soul, let us avail ourselves of the divine charity of which Judas failed to take advantage. What difficulties do men encounter to gain from the great of this world the honor of their friendship? And what is required of me in order that I may become the friend of the King of Glory, of the Lord of the Universe, my Lord Jesus Christ? I have only to wish it. He seeks my love, and from this

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 50.

moment He is my friend if I choose. Why then do I still delay to enter into the bonds of a holy friendship with Him, as this is the only source of happiness for me in time and in eternity?

Oh, immense condescension! Thou, my Jesus, Thou content to be my friend! Thou, the Son of God, to be the friend of me, a vile worm! So it is. My Jesus was sold by Judas and was bought by the Jews; yet He belongs neither to Judas nor to the Jews, for He was sold and bought for me. He is all mine, my Friend, my Beloved! and He asks of me nothing but my love. Learn, my soul, to value such a friend. Love Him who loves thee. In this interchange of love is thy all. He gives thee a kiss of grace whenever He inspires thee with a good thought. Correspond with His love.

I shall renew my league of friendship with Jesus Christ by again resolving never more to displease Him. On the contrary, I wish to please Him to the utmost of my ability by imitating those virtues which His Passion offers to my view.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### JESUS CHRIST APPREHENDED BY HIS ENEMIES IN THE GARDEN.

I. No sooner has Jesus Christ received the kiss given Him by Judas as a signal to the Jews, than they rush violently upon Him and surround Him like so many untamed beasts. But let us turn away from this savage cruelty and attend to the affectionate charity of Jesus. His one concern is for the safety of the Apostles. He will have the fury of His enemies turned against Himself alone. Therefore He commands, in the tone of a Master, that those who are with Him should not be molested. The good Shepherd cares not if the wolves fly at Him and tear Him; He thinks only of the care of His dear flock, to defend and safeguard it from harm.

Accordingly, not one of the Apostles is taken and hurt. But the Jews are filled with envenomed spite against them, for it is probable that as they came to take Jesus as a malefactor, they purposed to take also the Apostles as His accomplices. However, it was otherwise ordained by the Almighty Man-God, who knows how to make Himself obeyed, by whomsoever it may be, in the way and to the extent He pleases.

Consider that what the Saviour did in the garden to defend and protect the Apostles He does continually in the Church for the protection of the Faithful. On this occasion the Apostles were our representatives. Oh, what a sweet motive is this for us to devote ourselves daily more and more to Jesus Christ! The principal enemies of our eternal salvation are the devils who, full of envy and malignity, are ever thirsting for our ruin. But what have I to fear, though all hell should conspire against me, if Jesus Christ is with me? As there is no safety for one who is the enemy of God, so no injury can be inflicted upon him who truly serves Him.

O most powerful Jesus! to me there can not be a more consoling thought than this. When I consider the loving care Thou didst take of me even when I lived in sin, I can not for a moment fear that Thou wilt deprive me of Thy assistance if I follow Thee and love Thee with sincerity. How frequently has the devil tempted me, and has not prevailed because Thou wast present to defend me? How often, after my wickedness had led me into sin, would the infernal serpent have swallowed me up if Thou hadst not guarded me? I long for the eternal years of the other life that I may bless and thank Thee forever. Until then, relying fully on Thy goodness, I implore Thee to assist me against all the enemies of my soul,—the world, the devil, and the flesh. O my Jesus! I desire to live under Thy shadow, which is the shadow of life, where there is perfect security.

In temptation I should trust in God alone, since all help comes from Him only. I often fall, because I confide

in my own resolutions and in myself and have not the humility to place my trust in God.

II. Jesus Christ having given the Jews permission to apprehend Him, they rush upon Him; but St. Peter, animated with fervent zeal, approaches to defend Him. He had brought a sword with him, intending, perhaps, to make good his protestation that he would sooner lose his life than his faith. He strikes a blow at one of the boldest of the miscreants and cuts off his ear, thinking that the defence of his divine Master was a work of surpassing merit.

Nevertheless, though Peter's intention was right and good, Jesus Christ reproves him, telling him that if He chose to defend Himself, He could easily call to His aid twelve legions of angels.<sup>1</sup> The Saviour seeks not to save Himself, but to save us. Hence He does not defend Himself—apparently because He could not, but in reality because He would not; and He would not because it was not the will of His Eternal Father and because He desired to leave to us this example of meekness and patience.

This act of St. Peter's was not recorded in the Gospel-history without reason. I must regard it as a lesson to myself. It may often be lawful to follow the impulse of nature and to defend ourselves, but oh! how much more praiseworthy it is to bear injuries, as did Jesus Christ, than to return them. It appears one of the most difficult and exalted efforts of heroic virtue not to stand up in our own defence when it is in our power; but should we not be strengthened for it by one loving glance at Jesus, who, being able to do all things, does everything to defend those belonging to Him and will have nothing done for His own defence?

It is a mistake for me to imagine that every slight mortification of my predominant self-love is a great act of virtue. Am I to conceive that the life and honor of a vile worm like myself are more precious than the life and honor of the Incarnate Son of God, and that I ought to be more jealous of them? Occasions are extremely rare, in which I shall

(1) St. Matt. xxvi, 53.



be called upon to defend my life; but occasions frequently arise when I undertake to defend some favorite opinion or some point of honor, to ward off some trifling wrong, to answer a few sarcastic words. I go so far as to make it a matter of conscience to answer those persons whose remarks affect me, as if zeal required it, whereas the merit consists in being silent and supporting all with patience. Ah, my Redeemer, my Lord, my God! I beg of Thee the grace of light and strength which Thou hast merited for me by Thy meekness.

One word withheld for the love of God is worth more than a hundred words spoken with effect in my own defence. To acquire the practice of this maxim I shall remember the example of Jesus Christ.

III. Jesus Christ, having signified to Peter that He does not wish to have arms used in His defence, approaches the man who was wounded in the ear. He touches it with His hand and radically cures it, showing Himself not only gentle but beneficent to His enemies. He might heal the man by a tacit order of His will; but He is pleased to apply His hand in order that the miracle may be more evident, and also that it might be seen that He who touches and heals is Man and God, who heals man with the same hand that created him.

Beyond this can patience and kindness be conceived? A short time before He had worked a miracle of justice when He cast His enemies to the ground; now He works one of mercy to heal the wound of one of those who come with the greatest assurance to attack him. He displays a miracle of His patience, returning good for evil, and giving health to him who comes to carry Him off to death. Oh, lessons and instructions for me worthy of this Master! From them I should learn how to conduct myself toward those who wish me ill. Jesus Christ, by His words, had taught us to do good to those that injure us; now He teaches us the same by His example.

In my own person how many examples of this divine beneficence have I beheld! Hitherto, O my God! I have



done nothing but offend Thee, and what hast Thou continually done to me but good? On Thy side, mercy has been doing good for evil; on mine, wickedness has been rendering evil for good. Oh, goodness surpassing great in Thee! Oh, stubbornness without limit in me! How long shall I take occasion from Thy goodness to me to increase my wickedness against Thee? I am sorry for my excessive ingratitude. I beseech Thee, by Thy powerful assistance, to make me grateful and to heal the ear of my soul that in future I may attentively listen to and obey the voice of Thy inspirations, so that life may enter through my ears, as death entered by those of Adam.

Moreover, give me, O my Jesus! a heart to imitate Thee in doing good to my neighbor. When any one offends me I immediately experience the desire of retaliating, and if I do not take vengeance I yield to envy. I am sorry for the good that he possesses. I rejoice if any evil befalls him. I have not the shadow of that charity—patient, kind, gentle,—that returns good for evil. And yet this is a perfection which my character of Christian demands. Strengthen me, then, most loving Saviour! with Thy grace, to imitate Thee, so that for Thy love I may not only wish well, but also endeavor to do good, to all that injure me. To Thee, O Lord! I recommend all those who have in any way offended me. Bless them, do them good, and I shall rejoice thereat.

If I have no other way of doing good to those who do or who have done evil to me, I shall frequently remember to pray to the divine Majesty for each and all of them. This is a debt that I must pay; and, after the example of Jesus Christ, I will pay it.

IV. Peter beholds the meekness, the love, the kindness of Jesus Christ in the miracle of the ear cut off and again healed in a moment, yet he is not satisfied or convinced that the Son of God must, in this ignominious manner, fall into the hands of His enemies. Great are the faith and love of this Apostle toward His divine Master, and the thought that He should die is insupportable to him. Jesus does not

rebuke him, as He had previously done. He only remonstrates gently with him, thus: *The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*<sup>1</sup>

Reflect, in the first place, that Our Saviour calls His Passion a chalice; this chalice which, on account of its vastness and bitterness, the Prophet compares to a sea. He calls it a chalice, because in His charity all that He is about to suffer appears small. To His exceeding thirst an ocean of sufferings seems but a cupful, which He eagerly longs to drink to the very bottom as though it were filled with delicious sweetness. This is a property of love—to count all labors, all pains as nothing. Hence, being about to suffer and die for our love, He finds the chalice of His Passion sweet.

Consider, again, that Jesus Christ regards His Passion as a cup; that is, as a precious, delightful, loving present made Him by His Father. The thought that His Father has ordained that He should suffer, not driven thereto by necessity, but of His free will and of His pure goodness, so refreshes Him that He looks upon His Passion as a golden cup filled with the most exquisite liquor. What an object of imitation, what consolation do I find in it! Thus must I act in the midst of adversity. I must count it a favor, a grace, a mercy of my heavenly Father's; and taking those words from the mouth of Jesus Christ, I should repeat them with all the affection of my heart: *The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?* A Father, the most loving of fathers, and not less my Father when He takes good things from me than when He imparts them.

Thus should I speak; but, O my God! I do not. I look upon troubles as though they came to me by chance or by the wickedness of men, therefore I can not make up my mind to bear them. Ah, my Father, who art power, wisdom, goodness itself! fill my mind with Thy Spirit, inflame my heart with Thy love, so that in all my tribulations I may remember Thee and accept them from Thy adorable

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xviii, 11.

hand, enduring them willingly for my own salvation and for Thy glory.

A day never passes in which something does not occur to wound my self-love. I shall consider it a pleasure to bear all, if I acquire a determined habit of elevating my heart to God and being resigned.

V. We should remark with what serenity of heart and cheerfulness of countenance Jesus Christ speaks to Judas, to the Apostles, to the Jews, when on the point of being seized. Even now, as if all this was nothing to Him personally, He thinks only of doing good to souls by His doctrine, His miracles and example. Among the leaders of the party who are come to take Him, He sees the rulers of the synagogue, and gently reminds them of the lessons of salvation which He had given to them in the Temple. *Are you come out as to a robber, with swords and staves to apprehend Me? I was daily with you in the Temple teaching, and you did not lay hands on Me. But that the Scriptures may be fulfilled.*<sup>1</sup>

He says enough in this last instruction to enable them to see that He is God. But they neither remember His last benefits, nor are they moved by the present miracles and benefits of His clemency and love. Blinded by their own malice, on the very night on which they have celebrated their Passover—the anniversary of their deliverance from Egypt—they persevere obstinately in their rage against their divine Deliverer and become more and more exasperated.

Oh, wicked Jews! I should rather exclaim, much more wicked wretch that I am! How often at the moment that some temptation or my own concupiscence has been urging me to sin have I had lights of grace to remind me of the presence and the goodness of God! Lights that brought before me the grievousness of sin and should have restrained me from committing sin; and yet, obstinate and rebellious against divine inspirations, like the most wicked reprobates, I have sinned! I felt remorse of conscience.

(1) St. Mark xiv, 48, 49.

I recognized Thy noble gifts, O my God! I saw that I was doing an evil thing to offend Thee; and notwithstanding all this, in spite of Thy assisting grace, through pure malice, I have offended Thee.

O most loving Father! how dare I look up to Thee, after such ingratitude and perverseness on my part as to offend Thee at the very time in which I was experiencing the effects of Thy bounteous love? I deserve no mercy; but Thou, most holy Saviour! have deserved it for me. By Thy merits I implore it. I hope for it. Not only do I hope for the pardon of my past transgressions, but, moreover, that Thou wilt strengthen me by Thy powerful help to sin no more. Continue Thy mercy to me, I beseech Thee, and incline me to esteem it as I should and to turn it advantageously to Thy glory.

If I can not avoid sins of frailty I shall, at least, endeavor to avoid sins of malice committed with advertence, since it is these sins against conscience enlightened by God that bear the stamp of ingratitude.

VI. Jesus Christ would never have been taken by the Jews if He had not so chosen, and if He had not allowed Himself to be apprehended what would have become of us? He entered the garden on purpose that He might be taken. Accordingly, He gives them the permission, which they have no sooner obtained than they attack Him with diabolical fury. They fear He may escape from them. Therefore they bind Him as securely as ropes and chains can bind. All are in the greatest glee. All crowd upon Him to lay hold of Him. Each one is anxious to boast that He had a hand in taking Him. They strike Him with their fists, with staves, with swords. They throw Him down, they trample on Him and use Him as if He were the worst of malefactors.

Open now thy eyes, O my soul! and behold thy divine Saviour in the midst of all these outrages. He neither resists nor defends Himself nor shows resentment, but lets them treat Him as they will, as if He were altogether weak and without spirit. The Jews, full of hatred and rage,

congratulate themselves on having Him in their hands. Jesus Christ, also, all love for His heavenly Father and for us, congratulates Himself that the hour of His Passion has come,—that hour for which He has so ardently longed and sighed.

Oh, love of Jesus, love true to the last proof! I am the guilty one, the sinner who deserves shame and punishment. How is it then, my Lord and God! that Thou dost submit to all these pains and ignominies due to me? How is it that the just, the holy, the innocent and spotless Son of God should pay the debts of guilty man, and at the price of so much dishonor and such outrages? I admire, adore and thank Thy boundless charity, most sweet Saviour! Thy love, and nothing else, has brought Thee to this pitiable condition; that love which Thou hast for me. And, in return, what dost Thou expect for this excess of love?

Understand, O my soul! that all that Jesus Christ suffers, and that He will suffer throughout the course of His Passion, is intended to make us love Him in return. Though He should have suffered nothing for us, He would have been, for other reasons without number, most deserving of our love. How, then, shall we not love Him when we think of His most bitter sufferings? Ah, my Jesus! I am grieved that I have not loved Thee sooner, but I will love Thee now. And since Thou hast Thyself inspired me with the desire to love Thee, I ask of Thee, with humble earnestness, the grace to love Thee with a sincere mind and a pure heart and as much as Thou desirest to be loved. I love Thee at present in desire, and I beseech Thee to grant me perfect fulfilment of my desire.

I shall not be content with these general expressions of my love: I shall proceed to particulars. I behold what Jesus Christ has done for love of me. What shall I do and suffer for love of Him?

VII. What a marvel to see darkness not dispersed in presence of a brilliant light! Thus is it with the unhappy Jews who surround Jesus Christ. Instead of being enlightened, they become more blind. No one can describe



the ill-usage which they inflict upon Him. They bind Him around the body, around His neck and hands. What a painful affliction for Jesus to feel Himself bound as though He had been taken by force; whereas He surrendered Himself to them of His own free will, and He is perfectly ready to go of Himself whithersoever they please! For a man to suffer and die with his hands bound is always a disgrace, because he appears as if he were a cowardly, reluctant sufferer, not a valiant one. Shall we imagine that Our Saviour was insensible to this great dishonor placed upon Him?

But it is not these bands that afflict Him the most; with the Prophet, He sees Himself bound around from head to foot with far more painful cords. *All* the sins of men, from Adam to the end of the world, linked together, form a chain so long, so hard, as to quite unnerve and crush Him, so that He can with difficulty support Himself. However, He endures all this with fortitude, since it is by this very suffering that this chain must be broken. To this end He consented to be bound, that He might unbind our souls. There was no other means to break the chains of our sins, but to allow Himself to be loaded with chains.

Ah, benediction, praise, and thanksgiving forever be to Thy charity, most mighty Saviour! who, by enduring those painful bonds on Thy body, hast loosened and set free my soul from the slavery beneath which it lay. I was free by Thy merits, in which I participated in Baptism; but I have bound myself anew, of my own accord, by my sins, and these bonds can not be broken except by penance and contrition. Apply then, again, O good Jesus! Thy merits to my heart to make it contrite, so that it may melt with grief for having offended Thee.

Break, also, by the graces which Thou hast merited for me, the cords and chains of those evil habits that keep me enslaved to my passions; and grant that there may no longer be any bonds upon my soul but the sweet and lovely bonds of Thy most pure love which keep me united with and most intimately attached to Thee, resigned in all things to Thy divine will and in all things obedient to Thy divine

Majesty. Thy love for me was the cause of Thy Passion. May the effect and fruit of that Passion in me be love for Thee.

I shall offer to Jesus my soul and body and implore Him to bind me wholly with the bond of perfection, which is holy charity, that I may have no further power to exert myself for anything that may be displeasing to Him.

VIII. While contemplating Jesus Christ loaded with cords, chains and ignominies, we must reflect that this is in fulfilment of what He himself foretold, in conformity with the words of the Prophet, that He should be taken captive by sinners—and for no cause but our sins. And how has the Almighty been taken and reduced to such straits? It is not the Jews who have taken Him by force of arms, but divine charity in its unspeakable mystery. It is not hostile force which has bound Him against His will, but Himself who has thus freely willed and ordered it.

Come near, my soul, and behold Thy Lord thus ill-treated by these miscreants. Reflect and believe that He has thus left Himself to the mercy—or the no mercy—of sinners, for no reason but the salvation of sinners. Let us by reverent thought enter into His most sacred body: we shall see in what manner, while He still keeps shut up within Him those interior mental pains which He has conceived a short time previously, He now offers to His Eternal Father for us bodily pains as well. He tenderly kisses His bonds and rejoices that His holy Humanity should be deprived of liberty in order that we may breathe again the liberty of the sons of God. He thinks not of how He may escape and be free, but only how He may free and save us.

O immense goodness! O excess of charity! O infinite mercy! These bonds of Thine, good Jesus! are salutary binding for me to bind up and heal my wounds. Thy weakness is my strength. What thanks can I render to Thee for all this love? Here is my heart. Gladly would it love and thank Thee, but what can it do of itself? Do Thou give it strength to do all that pleaseth Thee.

Oh that once only, my Jesus! Thou hadst been delivered

into the hands of sinners, when the impious took Thee in the garden; but now and always Thou art seized and maltreated by sinners. How often have I, instead of compassionating Thee thus bound, rather tightened Thy bonds by adding to my sins! I could not have acted toward Thee with more wickedness, with more villainy than I have done. I grieve and repent for all my wickedness and crave Thy mercy.

In the meantime, my soul, hearken well to what Thy God says to thee. He wishes to be taken by thee, but in such a manner as to save and not to ruin thee. The wisdom and holiness of God can not be taken by iniquity, but by charity. If I love God I shall be all to my God, and God will be all mine. O Holy Ghost, Thou who art the love of the Father and the Son, impart to me this love!

I shall endeavor to make this love practical by frequent acts of contrition, of humiliation in the presence of the divine Majesty, of resignation to His will, of abnegation of my self-love.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### FLIGHT OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THE APPREHENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. THE Apostles, having witnessed the almighty power of Jesus Christ in the garden, when He cast His enemies to the ground with a word and healed the wounded ear by a touch of His hand, imagined that none of the Jews could prevail against Him. But when they see that He gives them power and permission to take Him, and even yields Himself up into their hands, they lose courage and immediately take to flight. They owed it to their fidelity and love to Him at least to follow and sympathize with Him, as they had done on other occasions, and having witnessed His miracles, they should have trusted in His divine power;

but they allowed themselves to be vanquished by cowardly fear.

Jesus Christ is, therefore, left alone in the midst of outrages—forsaken by the very persons whom He had loved and favored with the most striking partiality. Peter, James, and John were perfectly willing to be His companions, to enjoy the splendor of His glory on Mount Tabor, and all the Apostles had continued with Him in the supper room, but no one accompanies Him in His Passion; they all behave toward Him as if they had never known Him. Oh, the weakness and ingratitude of these thankless hearts!

But let us turn our zeal against ourself. O my God! my mind has not the power to recollect the graces and favors that I have unceasingly received from Thee. Neither father nor friend, nor any one whoever it may be, has had love for me like Thine. Thy charity is eternal, immense, unsurpassed. And yet how often have I turned my back on Thee, through human respect or a vain fear of some temporal inconvenience? In prosperity I can easily make it convenient to follow Thee; but when adversity comes my patience and resignation fail, and my cowardice is such that the slight trouble of conquering some little passion, of mortifying some trifling inclination, alarms me. I accuse myself of being the most ungrateful of ungrateful mortals, and I am grieved for my ingratitude.

Give me strength, O my God! that in following Thee I may, for the future, be afraid of nothing. Let me no longer be of the number of those who stand by Thee as long as Thou regalest them with consolations and sweetnesses but leave Thee at the first taste of bitterness. Unite me, bind me to Thyself by faith, hope, and charity, so that nothing in the world may ever separate me from Thee and that I may never again be ungrateful to Thee. O my poor soul, who has fled from thy Saviour, come back, turn to Him again. He waits for thee, that He may have mercy on thee. Fear not that He will fly from thee, for He is bound and the bands of His love hold Him fast, hold Him more



strongly than all those that Jewish rage has cast about Him.

My God is no less my God in the night of tribulation than in the daylight of consolation. Therefore I shall bless Him at all times and shall be faithful in His service, obeying my conscience in spite of all human respect whatsoever.

II. Our blessed Lord had foretold that all His Apostles would be surprised by temptation and, their faith failing, that they would forsake Him like timid sheep scattered hither and thither when their shepherd is attacked by some wild beast. We must consider well that the Apostles, when their divine Master had warned them beforehand of what would happen, were all shocked at the very thought and protested with ardent zeal that they would indeed die with Him, but never could they be forced to abandon Him.

Thus they spoke, in the first fervor with which they had been filled after receiving the Blessed Eucharist and strengthened with the divine word of God. When they came to act, how quickly was their fervor cooled! Fear entered into their hearts and poor human nature was left to its own frail weakness. Thus it happens with respect to all those who promise themselves great things, trusting more to passing transports of fervor springing from themselves than to the assistance of God. Do I not frequently see this very thing practically illustrated in myself?

More than a thousand times, in my prayers, Confessions, and Communions, I, too, have made fine resolutions rather to suffer or to die than be separated from the love of Jesus Christ. Whence is it that, more than a thousand times, I also have failed and forsaken Him when some slight temptation has arisen? If I look well into myself I shall find the reason of my failures to be that I depend too much on myself, and have little or no thought of placing my confidence in the help of God. Grace is refused to the proud and given to the humble.

Is it possible that, after such sad experience, I should never learn my own want of stability and constancy? It is in this point that I must diligently endeavor to gain a knowledge of my wretched state. This will be more ad-



vantageous to me than if I made my head a repository of every variety of knowledge. Oh, how vain and roving and fleeting and voluble is my heart! I have palpable proofs that in leaning on myself I lean on vanity. When shall I be rid, O my God! of this lurking pride? I fly to Thee, I abandon myself to Thee; in Thee I place all my trust. I know that Thou wilt not forsake me if I do not first forsake Thee. I beseech Thee, then, assist me by Thy grace that I may never turn from Thee for anything in the world. Neither shall I leave Thee, nor wilt Thou leave me, if I remain grounded in humility and in the true knowledge of myself.

In all my resolutions I shall be careful to depend on the help of God alone, being persuaded that I shall never keep them except by trusting altogether in His grace.

III. The flight of the Apostles might have been expected from the time in which Jesus Christ commanded them to watch and pray for strength to resist temptation, and they, being overcome by miserable sloth, lazily yielded to sleep,—so true it is that the man who grows weary and is negligent in prayer will soon depart from the path of virtue. The Apostles are an example of this. After promising and protesting that they would always stand by their divine Master, so as even to suffer death with Him, they leave Him and are scattered up and down at the very time that they should follow Him the most faithfully. Their dispersion is a natural consequence of their previous slothful neglect.

It must be that temptations shall come—and they will come unexpectedly. Of ourselves what strength have we to overcome them? God alone can help us. He has promised His assistance to none but those who humbly pray for it. Consequently, it follows that prayer is necessary in order not to yield to temptation. Experience teaches that the man who is negligent in recommending himself to God will give way and fall. This happens by the just permission of God Himself, who, however, never abandons any one unless he deserves to be abandoned.

What, then, shall become of me? I understand these truths and do not practise them. I acknowledge that this is the reason why I have been so often overcome and have fallen when temptations have come upon me; it is because I have neglected prayer; or, if I have prayed sometimes, it has been with a distracted mind, with a cold heart and without perseverance, because I have been quickly wearied. Ah, what blindness and stupidity!

If I continue in this way, not valuing prayer, what terror will seize upon me at the hour of death when I shall see all the graces merited for me by Jesus Christ, and shall also see that the Eternal Father was perfectly willing to grant me them if I had only had humility to ask for them. Moreover, I shall see that my not having received them will be imputed to my not having desired to have them, because I did not choose to pray for them.

Ah, enlighten and inflame my mind, O my God! In Thee it is supreme goodness that Thou art willing to give me grace if I but ask for it. It is pride and folly in me that I will not even ask for it in order to obtain it. If Thou detesteth pride wherever it exists, but more than all in the poor, how hateful to Thee must I be,—I who am so poor and yet so proud. Have pity, have mercy on me, O my God!

The humble man knows his own necessity and is not ashamed to ask for charity. Therefore I shall beg of Jesus Christ to give me holy humility. The exercise of this humility will, of itself, be an excellent prayer.

IV. It must have been a bitter affliction to Jesus Christ to see Himself forsaken by His friends and left alone in the hands of His enemies. With good reason does He complain of it by the mouth of His Prophets, in many places breaking forth into lamentations; comparing Himself at one time to a wretched hut, open to the winds and hail and with no one to dwell in it; at another, to a city uninhabited and laid waste. In fact, what a dishonor was it to the Son of God that His attendants should be afraid to follow Him; that His dearest, most faithful friends, chosen by Himself

and elevated to the highest dignities in His Church, should take to flight, like cowards, at the very time in which they should have relied on His almighty word and felt secure in His company.

However, there is no doubt that Jesus Christ is far more distressed for the Apostles who abandon Him than for Himself who is abandoned. His ardent love for them can not but cause Him profound grief on their account, knowing, as He does, the immense evil accomplished by any one that forsakes his Lord and Saviour. O loving Shepherd! who carest for Thy flock and art afflicted more for their dangers than for Thine own.

I consider Thy grief, O my Jesus! to have been more on my account than for Thy Apostles—since, after all, their flight admits of some excuse, as it was caused by a great and sudden alarm, so that I should regard it rather as a warning to us to be on our guard in certain circumstances, and we should reckon them more worthy of compassion than of blame. I represent them to myself, bursting into tears and sighs of sorrow at leaving Thee, at the very moment of their flight. But what excuse is there for me, what compassion is due to me, for the many times that I have, through pure malice, forsaken Thee by turning away from Thy laws, Thy doctrine, Thy example?

It is I, O my Saviour! who am the cause of Thy most severe afflictions. What, then, remains for me to do but to ask Thy pardon in a spirit of penance and sorrow? Would that I had never forsaken Thee, O my God! With Thy help I shall never more leave or forsake Thee. Thou art the way, the truth, and the life. What must he expect who turns from Thee, but to fall into precipices, to walk in darkness, and to die? Ah, my Jesus! give me in future the desire to fly from sin with holy, fervent haste, more than if it were a poisonous reptile, and from the occasions of sin as well. This would be a flight glorious, worthy of a Christian,—a flight that would do honor to Thy name. For the grace thus to fly I shall forever be thankful to Thee.

Never have I been so happy and peaceful as when I have remained true to Jesus. Therefore I shall resolve always to keep close to Him by His grace, as nowhere else can I be so secure.

V. We can not suppose it to have been by accident that Jesus Christ was left alone without a friend to stand by Him in His Passion, but to have been ordained from on high by divine Wisdom. At His birth He had the society of the shepherds; at the marriage-feast, at His Transfiguration, in His preaching, in His miracles, at the Supper, He had with Him sometimes Apostles, sometimes disciples; but when He was about to accomplish the Redemption of the world by His Passion He chose to be alone, as His Prophets had foretold.

He was alone, undergoing His mental passion, when He prayed and sweat blood for us all. Again He chooses to be alone when going to suffer in His body for us all, since exclusively to Him belongs this work—the greatest that God's wisdom can bring about. It is He alone that can save us by Himself. Hence, though He had companions during His life, He is pleased to have none now that He is going to seal the title-deed of our salvation with His death. And it is fitting that it should be so. For who could share with the Saviour in the salvation of others since each one has need of salvation for himself?

Reflect, my soul! that Jesus Christ alone was able and alone has chosen to be thy Saviour. Consequently, He alone must be the one object of Thy love. He has suffered for thee, all alone. No one joined Him in His sufferings for thee. Therefore does He alone deserve to be loved without any division of thy love in favor of others.

Yes, most lovely Jesus! if I had a million of hearts I ought to sacrifice and devote them all to Thee alone, because Thou alone art my Creator, Thou alone art my Redeemer, to whom I am and shall be eternally indebted for my entire being and for my salvation. And yet, ungrateful creature that I am, having but one and that a very little heart, I do not give Thee even the whole of it! I repent of the



love that I have had throughout my life for vanity. This love belonged to Thee, and I have unworthily squandered it with wanton injustice. When shall I, in truth, begin to love Thee?

I know my obligations; what afflicts me is, that I do not, in my affections, correspond with the light of my understanding. Empty my heart, I beseech Thee, of all other love, that it may be detached and filled with Thy love. By Thy love for me make me learn the love that I ought to have for Thee, and make me love Thee with all my mind, with all my heart, with all my strength, and above all things.

I shall examine my heart to see what my affection is for creatures, and I shall pray to the Lord to remove everything that obstructs and diminishes His holy love in me.

VI. The Apostles fly away terrified; but, like poor orphans who have lost their father, they turn again and again to look at Jesus Christ, their eyes filled with tears, and they compassionate Him. St. Peter is more confused than the rest. He, too, flies, though he is the boldest and the most firm in faith. On one side, he is urged on by fear of his own danger; on the other, restrained by his love for his divine Master; till, in this perplexity, not knowing whether to follow or to abandon Him, his love persuades Him to follow Him though his fear causes him to do so from afar.

Peter's feelings on this occasion appear worthy of praise. He was hesitating between his piety, which drew him one way, and his weak nature, which drove him another. We might look upon him as fervent and constant, since that at a distance at least he follows while the others fly altogether, if it were not that we remembered the great promise that he had made with so much more resolution than the others—of being faithful in following Jesus Christ even to death. Considering these protests, we must say that his withdrawal and standing thus afar off is a sign of deplorable lukewarmness, exceedingly displeasing to Jesus, and a sad forecast of his three falls which are soon to occur.



Here I behold the portrait of a tepid soul,—that is, precisely of my soul. In the service of God I also would fain obey the dictates of the spirit, and at the same time gratify the inclinations of sense. I would fain satisfy both conscience and concupiscence,—follow Jesus Christ, but at a distance, not desiring to keep close to Him. I wish not to offend Him by sin, but at the same time I would suffer no inconvenience in imitating His holy virtues, allowing myself whatever can in any way be permitted and thus removing all question of evangelical mortification. But these are vain, deceitful notions. My languor will soon become mortal; I can not long continue in it without some grievous falls. Unhappily I have experienced this in the past. Why do I expose myself to experience it again to my cost?

My Jesus, my God! to Thee I recommend myself, begging Thee to give me spiritual strength and resolution, so that I may be able to stand by Thee always; make me endeavor not only never to offend Thee, but, moreover, to imitate Thee perfectly. My love for Thee amounts to very little. Hence it is that being ruled by human respect, by the flesh and the world, I so frequently waver and stumble. Increase and strengthen me in Thy love; then I shall be wholly occupied throughout my life in the practice of virtue, after Thy example and following Thy teachings. O my God! who hast already presented me with such abundant mercies, depart not far from me that I may not remove far from Thee. Draw near to me, that I may come more and more closely to Thee and remain with Thee.

I should, and I desire to, belong entirely to God. I shall never succeed in doing this so long as I am guided by certain maxims of human respect, which I call considerations of discretion and prudence. I shall reflect on this human respect and learn to despise it.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## JESUS CHRIST LED FROM THE GARDEN TO THE HOUSE OF ANNAS.

I. THERE is no record to be found of a highway robber or assassin, or any other kind of malefactor, who, having fallen into the hands of justice, has been treated with such barbarous cruelty as Jesus Christ is now treated with by the merciless Jews. The idea they had formed of the true Son of God is that He is a sorcerer in league with the devil, and that if He is not securely guarded He will be able to escape by diabolical power. Having also been warned by Judas to hold and lead Him away with every precaution, we may conceive with how many cords, ropes, and chains they bind and straiten Him in every limb to make sure of their prey. Jesus Christ, as the Prophets had of old represented Him, is like a meek lamb; while the Jews act toward Him like rabid dogs, wild bulls, raging lions, or any of the fiercest and most savage beasts. This likewise is in conformity with what the Prophets had foretold of them. Who could enumerate either the acts of virtue practised by Jesus Christ or the movements of hatred, rage, and fury, to which the wretched Jews abandoned themselves?

See, then, my soul, behold the Almighty, the Saint of saints, in their midst as though He were the most wicked of men and unable to defend Himself. He looks around to see if there are any of His acquaintances following to comfort and assist Him. He finds not even one. Where are now the angels who once ministered to Him in the desert? Where the Apostles? Where the crowds that hailed Him as a great Prophet? Where is Mary, His most holy Mother? There is no one to speak to Him or to interest himself in His behalf. How is this? If I reflect, I shall understand that Jesus is in this condition because He wills it, and that which makes Him will it is nothing but the love He bears to me. This is true, most true; and is it not enough to move my affections?

O my Jesus, how great is my debt of gratitude to Thy in-

comparable charity ! These outrages inflicted on Thee were due to me, a most wicked sinner, in punishment of the grievous crimes with which I have offended Thy divine Majesty. Therefore how comes it that Thou, the just and innocent, dost endure the pains that I, who am the guilty culprit, deserve? Loving Saviour! I acknowledge that it is Thy love which causes this. But how couldst Thou place Thy noble affections on so ungrateful and rebellious a creature, who has continued so long to offend Thee even after having been redeemed by Thee? Now, at least, I beseech Thee, let me never more offend Thee! Let me love Thee now, at last, as I am bound to love Thee! Let me now, at last, compassionate and thank Thee as I should. Let me at least be grieved to behold Thy loving sweetness, so little loved by the generality of men and by myself. Satisfy, O my God, these my desires by Thy grace!

My love for Jesus Christ shall urge me to follow His example. I shall not resent what is said or done to annoy me, and I shall be meek and patient in supporting wrongs and contradictions for His love.

II. The Jews are full of bitterness, hatred, and rage against Jesus Christ on account of the bad opinion that they have formed of Him and of His doctrine, which is opposed to their wicked ways, and on account of His miracles, which they ascribe to magic. But their fury is intensified, and they bind Him still more tightly and treat Him still worse because they are instigated and urged on by their leaders, who are present. Moreover, their barbarity against Him is marvelously increased because they are stimulated and goaded on by the devils, who are wild with envy and fury against Him, fearing that He is the Messiah come to redeem the world.

They all attack and surround Him in every possible manner that they can think of, and they press so closely upon Him that He can scarcely breathe. Hence He complains, by the Prophet, that in this His bitter Passion He is like a man drowned beneath the water, which drenches Him from without and penetrates within Him. And what does Jesus

Christ under this deluge of water—that is, in the midst of all these pains and ignominies? These very waters He employs to wash and cleanse our souls from all that foulness and filth that render them so disgusting to the divine Majesty.

O Jesus, who art all sweetness, Thou amid so much bitterness! Oh, grant me, by the merits of Thy patience and penance which Thou didst exercise for me, that I may also be watered and bedewed with tears of sincere contrition for my sins. This is the fruit that I desire to see of the love that I owe to Thee above all creatures; namely, that I may hate and detest sin above all other evils, grieving over those sins which I have already committed and, for the time to come, living with such care and circumspection that I may commit no more. I present to Thee my desires. Who but Thyself, with the assistance of Thy holy grace, can impart to me the strength to put them into execution?

O my most amiable Saviour! to me it seems an impossibility that a soul should reflect in the light of faith on Thy dolorous Passion and not grieve for having sinned. And yet, dreadful is the thought! I see in my soul a multitude of iniquities and rebellions which I should repent of and grieve for even to the rending of my very heart from my bosom. And, still, I have neither repentance nor sorrow. What is this but a mark of reprobation and damnation in my regard? Can it be, O my dear Jesus! that this soul, for whose salvation Thou wert pleased to undergo so bitter a Passion, is to be damned? Ah, I beseech Thee! turn into bitterness for me all the sweetness of my sinful pleasures that have been to Thee so bitter, and grant that, with Thee, I may bitterly lament my most wicked life.

If I should be able to reap no other fruit from the Passion of Jesus Christ I shall at least reap this, which is the most suitable and proper fruit to be drawn from it—that is, a resolution to fly from and hate sin, and all dangerous occasions of sin.

III. The Prophet had foretold that the Saviour would be filled with reproaches, and this prophecy has been per-

fectly accomplished. If we reflect on the life of Jesus Christ during the three years of His public ministry, we may say that He was fed with reproaches in the persecutions which He suffered from the Jews, who were always intent on dishonoring Him with calumnies in order to discredit Him with the people. But, during the period of His Passion, beginning with His apprehension in the garden, He was not fed only, but He was saturated with reproaches, so immense was the number that He was forced to endure.

Behold, O my soul! thy loving Redeemer, dragged with violence out of the garden. These ruffians goad Him on without mercy; while He follows them meekly and without resistance. What outrages, what insults do not these inhuman wretches heap upon Him in this journey. They buffet Him, they kick Him, they strike Him with their staves, with their fists, to hurry Him on. They throw Him to the ground, then they fall on Him and trample Him beneath their feet.

And what passed in the mind of Jesus as He felt Himself thus trodden under foot and abused by this rabble, His head and face covered with bruises? As He beholds with the eyes of His mind His Majesty and holiness thus trampled upon He inwardly grieves. He looks on all this contumely as so many fearful outbreaks of the wrath of God punishing the sins of the world in the person of His sacred Humanity, and He offers it all to His Eternal Father, imploring mercy for us all. But I must remark that He asks for mercy in a special manner for me, as if there were no other sinner in existence besides myself and I alone had need to be redeemed by Him.

Oh, the patience, humility, and charity of Jesus! I adore Thee, O Thou most meek Lamb of God, and bless Thee for all this humiliation and abjection undergone for me! I am grieved that I also have trodden Thee under foot as often as I have sinned, and I confess that my malice has far surpassed that of the Jews. I offer to Thee the merits of Thy patient endurance, which was exceeding great, befitting and truly worthy of Thy character as Man-God. By



these same merits I beseech Thee to assist me, that I may meet with something painful for Thy love.

Ah, my Jesus! enlighten and inflame with Thy love this heart of mine which is so ungrateful, hard, and rebellious. Grant that I may avail myself of Thy Passion to offer to Thee due satisfaction for my sins, and to imitate Thee in the practice of those virtues which are most agreeable to Thee. Let me only be possessed with Thy love, and I shall do everything that pleases Thee and avoid everything that displeases Thee.

I shall mortify my anger, resentment, and the spirit of revenge when I meet with any injury or suffer some displeasure. I shall offer my displeasures to Jesus Christ and I shall accept them as a penance for my sins.

IV. Consider, my soul, in detail, the order and the circumstances of that journey which Jesus Christ has to make from the garden to the city of Jerusalem, and all the tokens of hatred and malignity that mark it. Judas goes in advance of the rest, eagerly pressing forward to lay his hands on the thirty pieces of silver. They yield to him the honor of being the head and chief of the troop; as, in truth, he is above them all in wickedness and treachery. The soldiery follow, and next to them comes Jesus Christ with bowed head and hands tied behind him, exhausted and out of breath, all but fainting from the violence with which they push Him on, surrounded by the rulers and their servants, who form a rear-guard to prevent His escape.

At the gate of the city stands a crowd of people looking out for Him, and each one loads Him with one false charge or another as though He were guilty of every manner of crime. Jesus Christ hears all, and in the midst of the reproaches that are cast upon Him from all directions He humbles Himself and feels as if He were a good-for-nothing, broken potsherd. He receives all this foul-mouthed abuse as so much punishment due for our sins.

Beneath the countless blows of His enemies He takes not one step in this journey but what is ordained by Himself to set us free from the enemies of our eternal salvation, to

reclaim us from the way of vice and perdition, and to advance us on the path of virtue toward Paradise. O Lord of Hosts, strong and mighty, I owe Thee thanks without measure for Thy boundless love! But how shall I ever praise and thank Thee as Thou deservest; I, who, in presence of Thy august Majesty, am but a vile worm? O King of Glory, let Thine own power praise Thee, Thine own wisdom, Thine own ineffable, superabounding goodness!

For my part, O my Jesus! I have no desire but to give Thee praise by following Thy steps and imitating Thee. Until now I have followed after vanity, and in this way of iniquity I have not been wanting in courage to do evil. But, oh, how weak and faint I feel myself in doing good! Bind me, I beseech Thee, with one of Thy cords and draw me after Thee. Direct and perfect my efforts in Thy holy service, so that I may never again stray from the right road either in thought or affection. My bad habits have enervated me and deprived me of strength. Thy mercy and Thy grace alone can renew it.

V. O my soul! follow Jesus Christ thy Lord through the streets of Jerusalem. It is night, but so many are the lanterns and torches lighted around Him that one may yet behold how tortured and crushed He is by the cruel treatment He receives at every step. The impious rabble that lead Him lift up their voice with cries of exultation, to give notice that He is taken. They clap their hands with joy. They glory over their prey. They make a mockery of Him before all, with words of ridicule and scorn, pointing to Him with their fingers as if to ask the beholders if He at all resembles the Saviour of the world.

The doors and windows of the houses are crowded with people gazing at Him with curious looks, but not one casts upon Him a glance of pity. Only a short time before He wrought in this city an infinity of miracles and preached marvelous doctrines. What confusion, then, and shame must now be His to be led thus ignominiously through these public streets? He might, if He pleased, exert His omnipotence, and by miracles appear all-glorious in the midst

of these insults; but for the cure of man's misery He compares Himself as a miserable man and suspends the exercise of His power, that He may leave the example of His invincible patience for our imitation.

Enter now, my soul! into thyself, and judge to which of the two thou bearest the most resemblance,—to Jesus or to the Jews. Ah, my Jesus! I see nothing in myself to make me like Thee, but, on the contrary, I see much in which I exactly resemble the Jews. How often have I, also, like the Jews, rejoiced and gloried in offences against Thy infinite Majesty! How often have I had the heart to laugh when I ought to have wept! If the Jews deserved Thy wrath for the malice that they displayed in their ignorance, what must become of me, who have been full of malice while enjoying the light of that faith which taught me to regard Thee as my true, my most adorable Saviour? O my God! one hell would not be enough for me. I confess that in punishment of my ingratitude many new hells should be created. Nevertheless, I crave pity. I beseech Thee that, instead of condemning me to burn in the fire of hell, Thou wilt make me burn with the fire of Thy love.

It was for this end that Thou didst permit the Jews to be cruel to Thee, that Thou mightest be merciful to me, and the mercy that I implore, that I hope for and expect, is the most precious grace of Thy love. By Thy own pure mercy Thou hast loved me, Thy most unworthy creature. It shall, moreover, be of Thy pure mercy that I shall be made worthy to love Thee, who art supremely deserving of love, since of myself what can I do but offend Thee? O Jesus, most merciful! if ever I attain to the happiness of loving Thee alone, to Thee will all the glory be due and I shall sing Thy loving mercies throughout eternity.

I shall compare myself with Jesus Christ, and I shall be confounded at beholding Him so patient and so humble and myself so impatient and so proud. In order practically to enter on the imitation of Jesus Christ, I shall humble myself to implore the assistance of His grace.

VI. After seeing Jesus Christ loaded with reproaches

in the city of Jerusalem, pause, my soul, and reflect. Does this your Saviour appear to you to be the same who, five days previously, was met with branches of olive and proclaimed King of Israel? What a change! Yet there is no marvel in this; it is full of mystery. No doubt, in His own person, Jesus Christ is worthy of all the honors in the world. But it is also true that He bears the character, as it were, of universal sinner. Hence, as He is pleased to undergo the punishment due to our pride He submits to all possible ignominy.

Whoever sins dishonors God by disobeying His holy Commandments. Consequently, what Jesus Christ purposed doing in His Passion was to restore to God the honor of which our sins had robbed Him. He alone was capable of doing this. For, as it was a God who had been dishonored by man, none but a Man-God could make to Him due reparation of honor. Jesus Christ voluntarily suffered the loss of His honor by all manner of insults and affronts; and as He suffered these, one after another, He offered them most humbly to His Eternal Father, with the most perfect intention to satisfy and to honor His Father. And oh, how immensely did the Father consider Himself honored by these dishonors undergone for sinners by so exalted a Personage! Thus was the Redemption of the world carried out.

O my Jesus! whose most sweet name designates Thee as my Saviour, who is there in all the world that owes Thee more than I do? While I behold Thee suffering all this degradation and contempt in punishment of man's pride, I am obliged to look on Thy Passion as intended for me more than for others. For who is there throughout the world to be compared with me for pride and arrogance? I acknowledge myself bound to Thee by a debt of gratitude greater than that of all men besides, since it is for me that Thou didst humble Thyself. But how can I ever please Thee so long as this predominant passion keeps its sway over me?

O most humble Saviour! reduced to so abject a con-



dition for me, I know what Thou dost expect of me and how great a right Thou hast to do so—it is that I should imitate Thy humility. Eternal Father! I ask of Thee humility through the merits of Jesus, that by it I may do my part to satisfy and honor Thee in imitation of Thy only-begotten Son. He, whom I present to Thee as my Mediator, Intercessor, and Advocate, is Jesus Christ. No grace can be refused to Him since His merits are infinite, as by His humility He has done Thee infinite honor. He is my Saviour, and by humility I must coöperate with His merits and merit for myself eternal salvation.

By practice I shall learn that the way to glorify God is to humble myself and willingly to accept the mortifications, humiliations, and occasions of shame that may come in my path. I shall think of the particular occasions that may probably arise.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### JESUS CHRIST BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL OF ANNAS.

I. ANNAS had been predecessor to Caiphas in the office of high-priesthood, therefore Jesus Christ was taken in the first place to Annas for two reasons. First, because this troop of thief-catchers followed Judas, and he was eager to receive the thirty pieces of silver that this wicked priest had promised him. Then, because these underlings were full of self-satisfaction at having taken Him and they wished to show off their exploits, which others had several times attempted, but in vain. As sportsmen who have caught a wild beast will lead it about to let people see and wonder at their skill, so the Jews take delight in leading Jesus Christ from one place to another to have themselves applauded and congratulated, as though they had delivered the country from an impostor and from one who had disturbed the public peace.

Having entered the great hall of the palace of Annas, they present to him Jesus Christ as if He were one of the



vilest miscreants living. Annas receives Him in this character; he commends their act, and congratulates them for their valiant conduct. The crafty old man is seated in a place of honor and fain would seem like a just man, zealous for God's honor. Jesus stands before him bound, as guilty of high treason against God and man. With what amazement did the angels then look on and adore the incomprehensible judgments of divine Wisdom as they see that sacrilegious priest, who plays the part of judge, and Jesus Christ, the true and eternal Priest, in the character of culprit about to be judged.

But for me there is more reason for terror than for wonder in the reflection that if the Son of God now allows Himself to be judged by a man, the day shall come when man will have to stand the judgment of God. Jesus Christ before this human tribunal practises humility and patience; yet He maintains in His interior the utmost serenity and intrepidity of heart, because He knows that He stands there utterly blameless, and that no one can charge Him with the most trifling fault. But what will be the case with me at the divine tribunal when I shall have to answer for myself before my eternal Judge? What shall become of me, filled as I am with abominations and iniquities which I shall be unable to conceal, since I have with me my own conscience to accuse and convict me?

For that time, O my God! I now implore Thy clemency. I pray Thee to judge me with the same love and mercy with which Thou didst submit to the judgment of wicked men for my eternal salvation. Ah, Thou who didst come to save me, have pity and do not condemn me! Assist me now by Thy grace to prepare my conscience for the Judgment Day and to lay by a store of good works, which alone will avail me in the day of Thy wrath.

That which alone can give me confidence in the judgment, either of man or of God, is the testimony of a good conscience. Let this then be my determination: *Nothing against conscience.* Oh, if I had only followed this rule in the days of my past life!

II. The high-priest Annas, in order to begin the examination of Jesus Christ, questions Him concerning His disciples. He should first inquire into the life of the supposed criminal and then proceed to take information respecting His accomplices. But as he could find no fault in Jesus Christ Himself, he tries to fix some blame on His disciples, in order to infer from this that He is a seditious man who collects followers and gathers meetings of the people to teach new doctrines.

The wily politician again insidiously asks what has become of His disciples. He knows that one of them has betrayed Him; He sees that all the rest have abandoned and left Him alone. Therefore he takes occasion to taunt Him with insult, in this manner: Did I not tell you that this Jesus of Nazareth was a daring hypocrite? You see even His disciples are of the same opinion. They too, at last, have found Him out. If He were a good man some one at least of His followers would have stood by Him faithfully to uphold His cause. But not even one is with Him. They all are ashamed of being recognized as His followers. Therefore it is evident that He is a deceiver. (St. John xviii.) Strong reasoning this for the judges of the world!

But how confused is Jesus to see Himself thus dishonored and discredited on account of His disciples! With one stroke of His omnipotence He can silence that impious man, whose words proceed from hatred and from the swellings of his own self-conceit. With one ray of His wisdom He can dissipate all those clouds with which they attempt to darken His honor. Nevertheless, He suffers the grievous ignominy and says nothing in His own justification.

I praise and glorify Thee, O my most meek Saviour! for Thy marvelous virtues, but in the attempt to praise Thee my conscience reproaches me for daring, unworthy as I am, to utter Thy praises. Therefore I confess Thy merits, and condemn my own wickedness. I profess to be a Christian, Thy follower. In doing this what occasion have I not given to the enemies of Thy Faith, by my evil doings, to blas-

pheme Thy most august name and to say the Master must needs be of little worth since His disciple is good-for-nothing.

Ah, my God, it is I alone who am wicked and false. Thou art good and holy; yea, rather goodness and holiness itself. I have often detested my sins as being offences against Thee. But now I detest them still more vehemently, for this aggravating circumstance—that they are offences committed against Thee by one who has been honored by Thee with the name and character of Christian. O my Lord! I beseech Thee let not Thy love abandon me. Grant that this love may always remain with me and may help me to follow Thee faithfully during the rest of my life.

Jesus Christ has honored me with the character of Christian. I ought to honor Him by imitating Him and by behaving as one of His true Christians should. To overcome my passions and temptations it is sufficient to reflect: *I am a Christian!*

III. Annas proceeds to question Jesus Christ concerning His doctrine. He does not do this to learn the truth for his own profit, but that he may censure the doctrine and take occasion of accusation against its author. The divine Master sees his perverse intention, and what pain must we believe it was to Him to behold His heavenly wisdom called to account as though it deserved suspicion, and His doctrine, which is the science of salvation and eternal life, turned into an occasion of condemning Him to death. He endures all so long as it is His own person only that is attacked, but He can not see contempt thrown upon that doctrine which is the doctrine of His Eternal Father and on which the salvation of the world depends.

He considers Himself bound to speak in its defence, and thus He answers: *I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why asketh thou Me? ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them: behold they know what*

*things I have said.*<sup>1</sup> Mark the intrepidity with which He speaks. He means to say that His doctrine is so true that concerning it He refers to the testimony,—not of the Apostles, His friends, but of the very Jews, His capital enemies; being well assured that no one will be able to prove it wrong. There can not be a more irrefragable proof of innocence than when a man calls his very enemies in evidence.

Shall I, O my God! in the Day of Judgment be able to use language like this when I shall have to render to Thee an account of my life? Shall I be able to call, I say, not on the devils, who are my enemies, to bear witness in my favor, but on the angels and saints who are my advocates? My own deeds themselves will raise their voice against me to accuse me! And what horror it shall be for me to hear published so many deeds of darkness, so many shameful actions, of which I can not now accuse myself without pain and confusion even to a confessor under the seal of secrecy!

Thou, O my Jesus! hadst no difficulty in giving account in a few words of Thy doctrine, because Thou knewest that it was most true. But when the time has arrived for me also to render an account of myself, how this doctrine has been professed and observed by me, what shall I answer? I believe that Thy doctrine is true; but if on my conscience I must declare how I observe it in practice I admit that I behave as if it were false, because I live in opposition to what it teaches, and consequently it is my faith that will accuse and condemn me. Ah, my Saviour! I am guilty and I have no excuse whatever to plead in my favor. I have nothing left but to cry mercy to Thee by the merits of Thy Passion. Mercy, O Eternal Father! and forgiveness of my sins for the sake of the pains and anguish which Thy beloved Son has suffered for me. O good Jesus! answer Thou for me, make satisfaction for me. Thou art my Saviour and Thou alone canst save me!

Jesus Christ taught nothing in secret which He did not wish to be also spoken publicly to His honor. I too shall

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xviii, 20, 21.



learn to do nothing secretly of which I might have reason to be ashamed if it became known.

IV. Jesus Christ could not have given a more true, more mild, or more just answer. It confounded Annas; he knew not what to reply. But a servant who stood by, thinking to please the high-priest by showing bold resentment, gives Jesus Christ a heavy blow on the face and thus reproaches Him, with arrogant assurance: "What now? Do you pretend to know better than he? Learn to conduct yourself more wisely another time."

Methinks that the heavens were horror-struck; the angels astounded, that they veiled their eyes at the sight of an affront so disgraceful, so painful, offered to the God of Glory by that impudent servant of iniquity. Contemplate, O my soul! that face of Jesus Christ, so longed-for by the Patriarchs,—that face which captivates all hearts with its beams of majesty and beauty. Behold it now bruised and black from this blow, His teeth loosened, His gums swollen, the blood gushing from His mouth, His nose, His eyes. Can we gaze upon that venerable countenance, so cruelly struck, and not be moved in our heart to compassion?

But for what end, O Lord! didst Thou permit Thy most beautiful countenance to be disfigured by this impious hand? Ah, yes, I understand,—our souls were disfigured and blackened by sin, and as by Thy death Thou wilt destroy our death, so by Thy bruises Thou wilt also take away our shameful deformities. O unparalleled charity! Grant, I beseech Thee, that I may coöperate with Thy Passion, purifying my soul by acts of sincere penance and contrition.

I am lost in wonder, O my Saviour! that lightning from heaven did not strike, or that the earth did not open and swallow, the man who dared outrage and shame Thee with that blow. But have I not more cause to wonder that the heavens have not fired their bolts on me and that the earth has not swallowed me, who have so often dared to offend Thee by my sins, each time renewing Thy bitter Passion? Who is bolder and more insolent than I, who have offended



Thee in spite of my boundless obligations to love Thee? Oh that I had never offended Thee, my God! Oh that I might be assured of never offending Thee again! Give me an abiding hatred, abhorrence, and dread of sin, so that I may fly from it above all possible evils, and may never more commit it for any imaginable good. Throughout my life may my sorrow for having sinned ever continue.

If I desire to be a true penitent, I must in future grieve for having sinned and be careful not to sin again. Should I fail either in this sorrow or in this resolution my repentance is not sincere, but false.

V. Let us weigh well the circumstances of this deed. Who is it that strikes the blow? A vile Jew, a servant and a thief-catcher. Who is it that receives it? A God Almighty, whom no one can resist; in whose presence the pillars of the firmament tremble with awe and beneath whom they stoop, pillars that support the world. Understand this thoroughly. God the Creator, who drew man out of nothing, receives a blow from those very hands which He created and framed with infinite wisdom and goodness. Moreover, the blow was most painful to Him; given with all the strength of the arm, as though He had been struck with a rod of iron. Can we conceive an affront comparable to this? Yet there is no one to chide this insolent servant, no one to condole with the innocent Lord. All rejoice at the outrage committed.

The Prophets who spoke of the Passion of the Saviour have laid especial stress on this injury, as if it by itself were sufficient to fill Him with reproaches. And, in fact, if at the thought alone of it we are fired with zeal and can not suffer that it should pass unrevenged, what must have been the feelings of Jesus while undergoing it? Assuredly, He might have visited it with the most severe vengeance without exceeding the limits of strict justice. But he prefers to exercise His humility rather than His justice, and His patience rather than His power; and He has more at heart to give me a lesson by His example than to punish that impious man.

And what advantage do I gain from this example? Good God, if I enumerate all the wrongs and all the offensive words with which men could overwhelm me, would they amount to anything in comparison with this blow received by the Son of God? How comes it that I have not the slightest patience in undergoing a trifling confusion, a small mortification which I may chance to meet with? When I think how quickly I am vexed and angry and show my ill-temper against those who offend me, I can only say that I am a bad Christian,—very far indeed, O my Jesus! from following Thy example and most unworthy that Thou shouldst suffer me in the bosom of Thy Church.

Assist me, I beseech Thee, most loving Saviour! Make me share in the spirit of Thy most humble and meek patience. Curb my temper, crush my pride, so that on these trying occasions I may have no thought of resentment or complaint, but may bear all with good will for Thy love and may regard patience as a greater treasure than all the goods of this world. I shall be prepared to bear everything if Thou wilt enlighten me to know that there is no evil so great that I do not deserve for my sins, and that whatever I may suffer is nothing in comparison with what Thou hast suffered for me.

Every virtue in Jesus Christ is intended to conquer the opposite vice in me. Therefore I shall make use of the humility, the patience, the sweetness, and gentleness of Jesus to mortify in myself pride, impatience, aversion, and anger toward my neighbor.

VI. Jesus Christ displays His humble patience in bearing this blow on His face; He also displays His gentle modesty in the answer which He so becomingly gives to the sacrilegious wretch who struck Him: *If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?*<sup>1</sup> He meant to say: I have done nothing but defend My doctrine; and you, who are one of those very people who before now heard and admired and praised Me, if at

(1) St. John xviii, 23.

that time, for the respect that you bore Me, you laid no hands on Me, how have you the heart to do it now?

This was a gentle reproof, with which the Saviour endeavored to lead that impious man to repentance and conversion. Moreover, it was a simple assertion that He had not failed in the respect due to the high-priest; though, in truth, Annas had nothing of the priesthood but the name. However, we have to learn from Jesus whether He be silent or whether He speak. When He is silent, He acts the part of the sheep prepared for sacrifice. When He speaks, that of the good shepherd instructing and inviting us to follow the example of His virtues. And is it not perfect virtue to know how to answer gently and to do good to those who do us evil? This is a mystery hidden from the reprobate world and reserved for the chosen followers and imitators of Jesus Christ.

O you, my senses and affections, do you not feel yourselves carried away by the boundless love of your Redeemer? Look at His face: how tender it is beneath that cruel blow, how hard it also is, so as to emit fire when struck, as if it were flint,—not the fire of wrath or hatred, but of love and benignity. Whether He remain silent, or whether He speak, His lips are ever full of grace, and in His silence, as well as in His discourse, He is always equally the worthy object of our imitation.

O God of Hosts, Eternal Father! our Protector in all necessities, I can not offer Thee an object more deserving of Thy regard than the bruised face of Thy only-begotten Son. Through that love with which His charity is worthy of being loved, be merciful to me and grant me the grace to make a good use of my tongue. Sometimes, when I am offended, I give vent to my feelings and break forth into violent expressions. At other times I keep silence; but a sort of silence full of ill-will. My words and my silence are both vicious. Grant, O my God! that both the one and the other may, like those of Jesus Christ, be virtuous. If I speak, let it be for truth and with modesty. If I hold my peace, let it be through humility and with patience.

The tongue corresponds to the heart. Therefore I must plant humility first in my heart, for God bestows His grace upon the humble; and whoever is humble has grace to know on all occasions when to speak, when to be silent, and thus how to act virtuously and as the occasion may demand.

VII. Jesus Christ had given this rule to His disciples, and in their persons, to all of us: that if any one strike us on one cheek, we should turn to him the other also. And what He here taught by word of mouth, He likewise explained and illustrated by His example. This instruction is not to be understood literally. For Christian patience dwells not on the face, but in the heart. It might be, then, that a man would offer the other cheek to his enemy and at the same time his heart would be full of anger and vain-glory, like the heart of a stoic. Consequently the divine Master intended to say, that if any one despises and offends us we must not only repress hatred, but, moreover, be prepared to suffer fresh injuries; without, however, neglecting the obligation of fraternal correction when requisite.

And who ever practised this precept with such perfection as Jesus Christ? To him that struck Him He gave a gentle and salutary admonition, and at the same time maintained in His tranquil Heart a perfect disposition to suffer whatever more grievous ignominy might be laid upon Him. He not only offered the other cheek to fresh blows, but His entire body to be nailed on the cross. Oh, if we could have seen the interior of the most amiable Saviour! What love of charity was there toward him who gave Him the blow! What love toward us, for whom He suffered and desired to suffer every species of painful torment!

Oh, happy and blessed is he that can imitate Jesus Christ in this disposition of heart—prepared after receiving one injury to receive another, and again another, for the exercise of mortification and humility! But, O my most loving Jesus, how far removed am I from thus imitating Thee! I have not the virtue to bear two or three sarcastic words which may be addressed to me. What, then, can I



expect from myself if I am treated with offensive acts? I can not receive in good part even a just reproof from some person who has zeal for correcting my faults, and I take a dislike to them whom I am bound to love. What confidence, then, can I place in myself that I may ever bear patiently a real injury done me? My impatience is in the highest degree culpable and scandalous. I beseech Thee to impress on my mind and heart Thy lessons of patience, that, as occasions offer, I may be enabled to put them into practice.

I wish, O my Redeemer! to imitate Thee. I wish it earnestly; and because I wish it, I also implore Thee to grant me Thy assistance. But who is it that makes me desire and hope and pray for this? Who but Thyself, O God of infinite bounty! And who but Thyself can also hear my prayers and satisfy my desires? The desire of virtue which I experience is Thy gift; and my attainment of virtue will not be ascribed to my own exertions, but it will also be Thy gift.

I shall acknowledge the root of my evil. I am impatient because I am proud. It is pride that makes me imagine that I am wronged at every turn; and yet no wrong is done me, since, on account of my sins, I deserve much worse than I meet with in every way.

VIII. If we take a survey of the whole course of the Passion of Jesus Christ we find that, enduring as He did all manner of injuries and pains, from all kinds of persons, He behaved throughout as a meek lamb, never opening His mouth either to defend Himself or to complain, or even so much as to say, *Why do you ill-treat Me?* It is only now, on receiving this blow, that He complains of the wanton act and is heard to say, *Why strikest thou Me?*<sup>1</sup> What can be the reason of this?

It is affirmed by some that this man was the very same Malchus whose ear Jesus Christ had miraculously healed in the garden; at which time, we have reason to believe, that the Saviour gave him besides health of body also health of

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xviii, 23.



soul. This He was wont to do to the sick on other occasions, enlightening their minds with faith and justifying them by the remission of their sins. With reason then did Jesus Christ complain only of this blow, as of an injury more grievous and more painful than all, it having been inflicted by one who, both in body and soul, had been so immensely benefited by Him. Nevertheless with what gentleness, with what kindness does He bear it!

But what benefits, both corporeal and spiritual, have I not also, O my God! received from Thee? And what offences have I not committed against Thee in return? When I think only of that one most striking benefit of Thy mercy—of having so frequently received pardon of my sins by Confession,—and then consider again the many times that I have returned to sin after Thou hast forgiven me, I imagine to myself that each time that I have sinned after Confession Thou hast said to me also, with just reason, *Most ungrateful creature, why dost thou ill-treat Me?*

But the worst is, that even now I am still the same that I have heretofore been. My whole life is nothing but a repetition of sins and Confessions. I go to Confession, and I do not amend. Instead of diligently using means of amendment, I still remain in my bad habits as before. Good God, when shall there be an end to this wickedness and ingratitude?

I know not where to look for help but to Thee, who art the Doer of great and incomprehensible things. I know that I deserve to be punished by Thy justice;—but I implore Thy clemency. I deserve Thy wrath, but I cry aloud for mercy—for that mercy which proceeds from the infinite treasury of Thy goodness. Let Thy most holy grace, I beseech Thee, come to my aid that I may offend Thee no more, but may love Thee above all things and may be most grateful for all Thy benefits, but principally for that of Confession.

I shall renew my examinations for Confession. God grant that I may not turn into sin the Sacrament instituted for canceling and correcting sins! What kind of examina-

tion of conscience do I make in preparation for it? What is my contrition? What my purpose of amendment? How do I accuse myself?

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### JESUS CHRIST AT THE TRIBUNAL OF CAIPHAS.

I. **ANNAS**, with his assistants, having examined Jesus Christ concerning His doctrine and His disciples, and not knowing what to do next as He had found no matter for accusation in Him, sends Him bound, as He had been brought to him, to the high-priest Caiphas, his son-in-law, hoping that he, being a man full of sophistry and artifice, might discover matter for His condemnation. Meanwhile the Jews, beholding the intrepidity of His behavior amid injuries and outrages, foam with fury and spite against Him. As they imagine that His unconquerable patience throws contempt on themselves, there is no treatment too vile for them to inflict on Christ to satisfy their vindictive rage. However, their cruelty only displays in a brighter light His sweet gentleness.

The Evangelist St. John calls upon all who read or meditate on this point—that is, Jesus Christ so ignominiously led to Caiphas,—to remember that this Caiphas was the man who, a short time previously, had said that Jesus Christ ought to be put to death to save His people. The Evangelist, I repeat, reminds us that Jesus is the Saviour of the world; that is, true God and true Man, come to make satisfaction for us and to die for our deliverance from eternal death, to which we were condemned for sin.

Therefore, we must firmly believe this article of the Divinity and Humanity ineffably united in one person; since, if Jesus Christ had been only God, or only Man, He could not have worked out our eternal salvation. And it is equally dangerous for us not to believe that He is God, or not to believe that He is Man. Ah, then, my God! en-

grave this faith on my memory, on my mind, and on my heart, that, frequently and fervently, I may exercise acts of it.

O my Lord Jesus Christ! as far as I know, as far as I am able, I believe that Thou art in truth God and Man. I believe it so firmly that, with Thy assistance, I shall give my blood and my life for the defence of the infallible truth of this Catholic faith. If I do not give to it all that fullness of belief which Thou art worthy to claim, I offer Thee all the more ardent faith with which so many millions of martyrs have honored Thee, accepting death for the glory of Thy name. In this faith I bless Thee in Thy sufferings, I adore Thee, I confess Thee to be my Saviour. Moreover, I implore Thee for grace to put into practice what I believe, by imitating Thee. For what would it profit me to believe Thee to be my Saviour if I did not coöperate in working out my own salvation by the imitation of Thy virtues?

I shall awaken in myself the belief that a Man-God allows Himself to be bound, outraged, condemned to death for me. In proportion to the liveliness of my faith shall also be that of my charity, and of all my other virtues.

II. The high-priest Caiphas, that most unworthy chief of the synagogue, is sitting in the council-hall, surrounded with the doctors and ancients, who, being informed of the capture of Jesus Christ, had come together in that place to wait for Him. No sooner do they see Him appear than they begin to consult, not whether He can be condemned, but how He must be condemned. They all are so athirst for His blood that they would fain there and then put Him to death without more ado. It is not enough for them that He should die; He must die as a criminal, with the disgrace of having deserved death.

These wicked men are urged on by envy to put Jesus Christ to death. But, jealous of their own reputation, they study how to disguise their malignant passions under the garb of justice. They make a show, therefore, of instituting a judicial process; but this is only an insidious pretext. They seek witnesses; but if these be false it is nothing to

them, provided they may in any way seem to be true. They care not whether or not the sentence be just if it only have some semblance of justice.

Envy, pride, and hypocrisy, are in league against Jesus Christ. All agree to put Him to death, because they are envious; but without discredit to themselves, because they are proud; and it must be so contrived that in the very act of crime they may seem virtuous, because they are hypocrites. Now do I not perceive here the exact image of what goes on within me? I have thought myself free at least from the vice of hypocrisy, and yet how deeply am I infected with it? How often do I cloak evil with the semblance of good! Envy and ill-will with the appearance of zeal! Pride under the color of humility! A corrupt interior under a modest exterior! Evil intentions under the mask of pretended honest simplicity! And really what is all this but an exhibition of hypocrisy?

O my God, Searcher of hearts! what shall become of me when the time arrives for Thee to bring to light my hidden works of darkness, and for all my hypocrisy to be detected? Make me, I beseech Thee, rightly apprehend the grievousness of this evil, which is so much the more dangerous as it is less noticed, in order that I may carefully correct myself. With feelings of profound sorrow I detest and abominate this vice as being utterly opposed to Thee. Thou art the God of truth,—and what is hypocrisy but a lie, a deceit? God of truth, make me love truth and despise falsehood, which profits nothing for eternity.

Hypocrisy is most disgraceful. I shall remedy it by thinking of the Day of Judgment, when all hypocrites shall be ashamed and confounded. There is nothing so hidden that it shall not be made public.

III. This council assembled by Caiphas had been repeatedly foretold in the Psalms, as one in which it would be wickedly attempted to blacken with calumnies the innocence and good name of the Saviour. And, indeed, what do they not say and do to load Him with false aspersions? These impious men in their conscience know that the life



and doctrine of Jesus Christ are faultless. For on **how** many occasions had they artfully watched and questioned **Him**, and had never been able to find **anything** to blame or censure in **Him**? They also know that there is **no** witness who can, with truth, allege the slightest evil against **Him**. Yet so great is their desire to stamp **Him** with infamy and to bring **Him** to an ignominious death, that unable to discover true evidence against **Him**, they seek for false.

But how does the divine Wisdom laugh to scorn the counsels of men! Those very witnesses brought forward to make **Him** appear a criminal, being all found liars and without credit, do nothing except to place in a clearer light His spotless innocence. Jesus Christ had lived a life so pure, upright, and exemplary, that not a shadow or appearance of a fault could be discovered to darken His good name. In all the accusations brought against **Him**, truth prevails over falsehood and iniquity betrays itself.

To me it is a supreme consolation, O my Lord Jesus Christ! that Thy innocence shines so clear amid all these wicked allegations. I adore the providence of Thy heavenly Father, who has so ordered that when Thou art led out to die Thou shouldst go with Thy innocence acknowledged before all the world, unjustly condemned without the shadow of a fault. And I wonder at the perfidy of the Jews, who leave no stone unturned to find false witnesses to condemn Thee. But, at the same time, my conscience accuses and convicts me of the same wickedness.

Thus it is that I, too, seek false witnesses against Thee, my most innocent Saviour, as often as I seek for arguments, opinions, probabilities, to cloud the truth of Thy holy Gospel. I know what my conscience tells me are my duties toward Thee, toward my neighbor, and myself. But how frequently do I frame for myself a false conscience to persuade myself of the lawfulness of certain things which are, in truth, unlawful! How often do I give the preference to a fallacious opinion of my own, favoring concupiscence in opposition to Thy most holy law! I repent of all my wickedness, O my God! and by the love which Thou hast for



truth I implore Thee to give me an upright conscience, which may on all occasions do justice to the cause of truth. Safeguard me from being led by my opinion, by making me always remember that I shall be judged, not by the rule of opinion, but of conscience.

The Gospel teaches that the way to Paradise is narrow. I must then learn to reject false witnesses, certain base opinions which withdraw me from Evangelical mortification, and I must check the corrupt inclination that my senses have toward liberty.

IV. The hall of the great council is full of people. And Caiphas, having given permission to all to speak against Jesus Christ, at the same time intimating that the more accusers there are the better he will be pleased, many stand up together and rudely push one against another to get forward and to curry favor by their accusations. Each one utters whatever comes to his mind—one thing or another which he has heard from the Scribes and Pharisees, professed slanderers, to blacken the Saviour's character. Some affirm that He is a glutton, a drunkard, and a friend of sinners. Others depose that He is a notorious sinner, a perverter of the multitude, a blasphemer of God. Others, that He is addicted to superstitious acts, and a presumptuous boaster. What a concatenation of calumnies! and Jesus Christ, as He stands there to listen to them, how does He behave?

To a man of honor there is nothing more tormenting than calumny. He would count it a less evil to die than to survive his good name. Consequently, we may believe that Jesus Christ is now drinking that chalice of most afflicting bitterness from which His most honored Humanity had prayed in the garden to be dispensed. He hears all, and leaving His sensitive appetite to feel all the anguish which the load of atrocious lies can occasion it, He suffers all with unconquerable patience, and, with marvelous charity, He prays for those who slander Him.

What, O my soul! must we learn from this example? I shall learn patience when I hear evil spoken against me.

If I take to heart and feel pain from what evil tongues say of me, and imagine that I have reason to complain because my honor has been basely attacked and wounded, I will again learn from this not to do unto others what I am not pleased should be done to myself. O my God! I am much inclined to the vice of evil-speaking. I readily interpret the conduct of others in an unfavorable sense. I yield to evil suspicions and express them. I am ready to mention the faults of others, with exaggeration; to repeat the evil I hear of others, not reflecting whether it be true or false, and not thinking of the injury I may inflict on their honor.

Ah, my Jesus! make me understand the heinousness and deformity of this vice and bestow upon me the grace to love my neighbor with the same love that I bear myself, so that, as I am so much pained when any evil is spoken of me, I may speak evil of no one else. I repent of all the sins that I have committed with my slanderous tongue and I resolve to curb it, since I desire to love my neighbor as myself for the love of Thee. But who, O my God! except Thou will be able to govern this tongue of mine, without a special grace from Thee? Therefore I offer and commit it to Thee, praying Thee to guard it. It might easily happen that I should incur damnation for sins of the tongue. Ah! what torments shall I suffer in my tongue if I am damned on account of it.

I shall often go to the root of evil-speaking, which is pride and envy. To my pride I shall oppose the humility of Jesus. To my envy, His charity. Every disorder of the tongue springs from the heart.

V. Caiphas foams with rage at not finding witnesses to depose anything against Jesus Christ that may have so much as an appearance of truth. Trembling, therefore, with diabolical fury, he rises from his seat, resolved, if possible, to provoke some rash word from the innocent Victim who stands before him with His head bowed down, without uttering a word, in most profound humility. *Answereth Thou nothing*, he says, *to the things which these*

*witness against Thee?*<sup>1</sup> Full of guile, he speaks thus that he may draw something from His lips with which to criminate Him one way or another. But the Saviour, who beholds his malicious purpose, lets him speak and holds His peace.

He holds His peace, not from necessity or from want of ability to find means to justify Himself, but by a voluntary, virtuous choice of His own. He holds His peace because no reply is called for when the accusations are manifestly groundless. He is silent, as the Prophet had foretold, because by this silence He practises humility and patience and proves Himself to be, in our behalf, the Lord strong and mighty in battles, triumphing over sin and the world at the very time that the world, in its pride, fancies it has conquered Him. O marvelous silence!

Well, indeed, does Jesus Christ teach me that against calumnies and reproaches there is no better safeguard than humility and patience. How true is this lesson! What do we gain by answering impertinences, which we thereby only encourage? On the other hand, what do we gain by silence if it be disdainful and proud? Even human prudence forbids replying. But, in order to be meritorious, our silence must spring from Christian virtue.

In the practice of this point of duty, O my God! I am exceedingly defective. I require to have this maxim impressed upon me: that moral virtues alone, if they spring not from a supernatural motive, are not sufficient to obtain for me eternal bliss. How many things I do that in themselves are really good, and yet they help me in no way to gain heaven, because in doing them I follow the dictates of human reason and have in view nothing but human respect; whereas, I ought to perform them for Thy love, O my God!

Eternal Father! I offer to Thee the meritorious silence of Jesus when He suffered those disgraceful calumnies. Take from me, I beseech Thee, all that prudence that savors of the flesh and the world and which serves only to nourish my self-love, to make my sufferings more grievous

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 62.

to bear, and to deprive me of Thy sweet consolations. Give me, in place of it, true Christian prudence, which the world knows nothing about, but derides as folly and simplicity; which has its source in Thy grace, and which Thou refusest to the proud and givest only to the humble. Enlighten my mind to know genuine prudence; give fervor to my heart to love and desire it, and strength to my will to follow its dictates and resolutely practise them.

It is not enough to suffer humiliations. I must suffer them in order to imitate Jesus Christ and for the love of Jesus Christ. To remember Jesus Christ, who has suffered so much and so willingly for me, will make my sufferings acceptable indeed.

VI. Caiphas, seeing that Jesus Christ, although provoked to speak, replies not but holds His peace, instead of admiring this virtuous silence becomes more and more enraged, and makes an attempt in another way to force Him to answer, that something may escape Him on which an accusation can be based. Therefore, he says: *I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ the Son of God.*<sup>1</sup> O infernal craft and malice! The impious judge is aware that on other occasions Jesus Christ said that He is the Son of God. Now he asks Him this question, not with the intention to believe in Him, but to entangle Him whichever way He answers. If He says yes, this yes will be a blasphemy; if no, this no will be equally against Him as convicting Him of being a deceiver of the people. In short, whether His answer is yes or no Caiphas is determined to make it a crime of most heinous atrocity, deserving to be punished with death.

All present—priests, Scribes, and Pharisees—have the same purpose. We must observe how these men make use of the holy name of God in order to bring about the greatest crime imaginable against God, even the death of the Son of God made Man, and they intend to turn into a means of their own damnation that confession which Jesus Christ is about to make of His Divinity, on which depends the salva-

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 63.



tion of the world. Oh, to what depths will a ruling passion bring us! What urges these unhappy men to take occasion from things the most sacred to commit so enormous a sacrilege but pride, envy, anger, hatred, which they made no effort to check in their first impulses?

Here is an example for me to learn caution in the dangers that surround me. I greatly fear that I may use what is most holy and sacred in religion, for instance, the Sacraments, to bring on myself the guilt of sacrilege by reason of my unmortified passions. I feel within myself a disorderly affection for all those things that nourish in me pride of heart or sensuality of the flesh. Nevertheless, without reflecting on my state I continue to participate in the most holy Mysteries. I may flatter myself and exclaim, *Where is the harm?* But who can say whether this outward, apparent piety of mine, in approaching the Sacraments with so many vain and worldly and unmortified dispositions opposed to the love of God, may not place me among those who are enemies rather than disciples of the Saviour?

Ah, my God! remove from me all those passions that cause me to be a profaner of Thy most holy Sacraments. Bestow upon me that spirit of mortification which is necessary in order to subdue my love of vanity, and grant me Thy love, that love by which whoever possesses it immediately ceases to be wicked, and becomes good. Other virtues will, one by one, overcome other vices; but Thy love combats and conquers all vices at once.

I shall examine myself in regard to my passions to see if, perchance, I am deluding myself and approaching the Sacraments unworthily. It may happen that my present evil is not grievous, but it may and will become so by degrees if I do not constantly endeavor to acquire mortification of self.

VII. Although Jesus Christ is well aware that these impious men are unworthy of His replies, and that they will reap no benefit from them, nevertheless He answers the adjuration of Caiphas, to manifest His supreme love of



truth and His supreme reverence for the holy name of God. He plainly confesses that He is the true Son of God. Shortly before He was apprehended in the garden He said to His enemies, *I am He*;<sup>1</sup> and these words were as a thunderbolt of His omnipotence that laid them prostrate on the earth. Now again He says, *I am He*, and this previous to His condemnation; and these words are as a thunderbolt of His justice that declares these enemies inexcusable in their obstinate malice.

Let us reflect on the lesson here given us. Jesus Christ knows that His answer, when He confesses Himself Son of God, will be made use of by the wicked Jews as an occasion to condemn Him to death; and there is no doubt that He might have been silent, since neither the violence and haughty words of Caiphas nor the threats of the ruffians surrounding Him could force Him to speak, like a man questioned on the rack. Notwithstanding all this, He answers freely and willingly. Nothing, not even death, prevents Him from confessing the truth for the glory of His heavenly Father and the salvation of the world.

Oh, when I compare myself with this example, what confusion should it be to me, who am so cowardly in the practice of my duties and allow myself to be overcome by human respect! If I were called to confess the faith of Jesus Christ at the peril of my life, where should I find courage to do it since I have not the strength to stand up in the defence of virtue at the risk only of incurring some one's ill-will, or of receiving an evil word? This is my weak point:—I would fain be a Christian and a man of the world at the same time. And how often do I grow lax in the practice of virtue rather than lose the empty esteem and favor of the lovers of this world!

O my Jesus, how great is the love that Thou hast for me! And oh, how trifling is my love for Thee! Because Thou dost indeed love me Thou hast thought nothing of exposing Thy own life for me; and because I, in truth, do not love Thee, every vain phantom of difficulty alarms me. Fortify

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xviii, 5.

my heart, I implore Thee, so that on every occasion I may, with intrepidity, confess, both by word and example, that Thou art my God, my true, sole, supreme, and most admirable Good. Nothing can give me courage except Thy love. Therefore make me love Thee with my whole heart. If I love Thee in this manner I shall be prepared to suffer all things for Thee.

I shall confess Jesus Christ to be what He is in reality, true God, every time that I imitate His meekness, His humility, His patience, and His other excellent virtues.

VIII. Jesus Christ, having declared His Divinity, subjoins a proof of it, making mention of the General Judgment and protesting to Caiphas, as well as to the rest, that when they shall behold Him appear, seated in glory at the right hand of the Eternal Father, they will understand who He is. They will know this Son of Man to be God. They will see Him, who is now being judged, as Judge of all the world. They will see Him, who now in His humility is despised, to be the most exalted in majesty. Him who is now reputed a malefactor, to be the God of truth and holiness.

What the Saviour intends to do is to establish the faith which is so necessary for our salvation—that we should believe Him to be the true Son of God and the true Son of Man. At the same time He desires to establish on a firm basis our hope, by giving us to understand that everything here, whether prosperity or adversity, will quickly come to an end, and that the time shall soon arrive when to the good will be given eternal glory, and to the wicked eternal pain. In the Day of Judgment, how great shall be the confusion of the reprobate, who have followed their vicious passions! And what shall be the consolation of the elect, who have imitated the examples of virtue given by Jesus Christ! What will the eternal Judge do on that last day but glorify the humble and humble the proud!

O my soul, is there not sufficient virtue in the example of Jesus Christ and in the hope of enjoying, with Jesus Christ, a share of His eternal bliss to encourage me to suffer with a

good will the tribulations, the humiliations, and the displeasures of this world? Now is the time for patience and humility. But let us be courageous, before long we shall partake of immortality and glory! We deserve it not. We are unworthy of it. But a God has merited it for us, a God has promised it to us;—and the word of God is infallible.

Meanwhile I humble myself and adore Thee, prostrate before the throne of Thy royal greatness, O my Lord Jesus Christ! I believe Thee to be true God and true Man, the Judge of the living and the dead, who shall come at the end of ages to reward or to punish according as each one shall deserve. I rejoice to think that the day approaches when all Thy enemies shall confess Thy greatness and Thy innocence. Oh, grant that the certainty of Thy judgment may remain impressed on my soul. This, I know, will be an efficacious help to induce me to serve Thee faithfully and to follow Thy examples.

I shall exercise myself in acts of faith, that Jesus Christ is my Saviour, in order to excite me to love Him; and also that He is my Judge, that I may fear Him. When at times love fails to support me, I shall supply its place by fear.

IX. Having heard the answer of Jesus Christ, declaring Himself the Son of God, Caiphas should instantly have prostrated himself on the ground with reverential fear, and, by his example, have moved the rest to acts of profound adoration. But he does nothing of the sort. On the contrary, he becomes more enraged, gnashes his teeth, and rends his priestly garment as if horrified at hearing a tremendous blasphemy. Most foul hypocrite! he pretends to be animated with zeal for the honor of God, whereas his actions are nothing but the mad transports of frenzied rage. He pretends to be exceedingly displeased, as at an offence against God, while he is, in truth, delighted to have found an opportunity to accuse and condemn the very Son of God. He is not content with simply accusing Him; he makes use of every means to increase and exaggerate the pretended crime and to make it appear more grievous.

And does Jesus Christ justify Himself on hearing so atrocious and hateful a crime imputed to Him? Does He say in His defence that what He has spoken is no blasphemy, but the very truth? Does He resentfully retort on His accusers, by showing that the blasphemy is not in Him for declaring Himself the Son of God, but in those who deny it? He hears this most false accusation and suffers it with patience and meekly keeps silence. Oh, admirable example!

If it sometimes happens that anything false is alleged against me I complain, I wrangle, I can never say enough to this person and to that person to prove that I have been unjustly and wrongfully blamed, and that all the tongues that speak against me are false and malignant. My passion magnifies the fault in my own eyes; every trifling wrong appears to me as something enormous, which requires an extraordinary degree of patience to endure.

What sort of Christian am I, with sentiments so opposed to those of Jesus Christ? Behold, my soul, thy Saviour treated as a blasphemer; while in fact there never has been one, nor is, nor ever will be, to be compared with Him for the glory that He gives to God. Oh, what meekness! Oh, what patience under so grievous an insult! How can there be any difficulty in bearing the most offensive calumny if we only keep this example before our eyes?

Most sweet Jesus! I shall imitate Thee by the endurance of every manner of wrong. This I have many times resolved to do, and now again resolve to do the same. But alas! I am so unstable that my resolutions are like the flower of the field which, in the morning blooms and in the evening is dried up. By Thy help give stability to my constancy. Make me know and detest my pride, that gives me too exalted an opinion of myself and makes me imagine myself stable, constant, firm, like a marble column; whereas, I am a hollow reed that bends at every breath of wind.

When I become impatient under adversity I shall gather humility from my impatience, and through this humility I



shall obtain grace to be patient on occasions that may afterward arise.

X. If Caiphas were to propose to those assessors of his, who were masters profoundly learned in the law, to examine dispassionately the answer of Jesus Christ, he would discover by the light of His doctrine and miracles, comparing them with the Scriptures and calculating the times, that He is truly the desired Messiah. But blinded by malice, he insists without further inquiry that truth is blasphemy, and that the innocent One should be condemned as a criminal convicted on his own confession. Therefore he turns to those around him, and, while falsely pretending to leave the case to their judgment, he urges and forces them, by his importunate manner of speaking and acting, to unite with him in the unjust sentence.

In effect they all yield to him, and constituting themselves in defiance of the law at the same time accusers, witnesses, and judges, they tumultuously raise their voice and cry out that Jesus deserves to be put to death. Blind, unhappy men! They have before their eyes the expected Messiah, and they see Him not. Their passions have such dominion over them that reason loses all its power. No wonder, then, that from minds thus perverted by malice a perverse judgment should be announced. The Prophet had already seen them from afar as drunkards, void of sense; and such they are in effect, by the fumes that rise to their head through pride, envy, and rage.

But I must not give too much license to my indignation against these men, suborned and seduced by Caiphas. I also have my Caiphas within myself; that is, my self-love, that head of an entire troop of subordinate passions. This self-love is the enemy of truth, the lover of lies. And, oh, my Jesus! how proud, how mad, is this ruler who does not hesitate to trample under foot in me Thy love, and condemns in Thee Thy most lovely goodness. This is the tyrant that excites to rebellion all my senses, interior and exterior, and with them cries against Thee and will have Thee put to death, O beloved Author of life! O detestable



self-love! It is against this monster that I should arouse my zeal and indignation. But how can I succeed in crushing it if it has gained the ascendancy in me?

I call Thy mercy to my assistance, O Love of loves, my Lord Jesus Christ! There is no champion so valorous as to stand up against my self-love, except love for Thee. Grant, therefore, I beseech Thee, that I may love Thee ardently. Thus shall I ever exclaim with all the powers of my soul, with all the affections of my heart, with all the senses of my body, *Live Jesus!* Let Him live in whom all the living have life, and in whom he that lives shall not die for evermore. Angels and saints of Paradise! I join with you in crying out that Jesus is worthy of everlasting life and everlasting glory, in opposition to the impious tongues that cry out that He is deserving of death.

Self-love makes war on the side of concupiscence against conscience, and gives an appearance of probability to many erroneous opinions. I shall examine myself and be on my guard concerning this matter.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### JESUS CHRIST MOCKED IN THE HOUSE OF CAIPHAS.

I. No sooner have the soldiers, the officers and servants, heard the sentence of the council, that Jesus Christ deserves to be condemned to death as a blasphemer, than they become mad with impious zeal against Him and give vent to their rage, some with words of ignominy, some with scornful raillery; others fall upon His very person with the most cruel ill-treatment that they can devise. These rulers and ancients of the Jews, forgetful of their accustomed gravity, lead the way in putting Him to shame,—and what does the remainder of the rabble say and do, after their example?

Jesus Christ receives it all with most profound humility. In the meantime we must remark that his humility does

not in the least mitigate His interior suffering. He loves His own honor, as it deserves to be loved. Moreover, He has within His soul every capacity for the most sensitive feeling of the dishonor laid upon Him. Hence it is that He, being most desirous of suffering both in body and in mind, allows no occasion of suffering to pass. He accepts every outrage, weighs and ruminates it with His most noble, refined, and sensitive spirit, in order to extract from it all the affliction possible. His mind preserves its full and undisturbed calmness and serenity. He ponders the grievousness of every word spoken to Him, of every evil expression used against Him, of every wrong done Him, and the bitterness of His affliction is in proportion to the liveliness of His apprehension.

Most sweet Jesus! what admirable lessons do I not find in meditating on Thee thus mocked and spurned? This hour may be truly said to be the hour of Thy enemies, and Thy hour too. It is the hour of Thy enemies, who are bent on satisfying their own rage and hatred; it is likewise Thy hour, since in it Thou also art seeking satisfaction for Thy burning charity. They leave nothing undone to outrage Thee as their fury prompts them. On Thy part, Thou leavest nothing undone to suffer more and more as Thy love inspires Thee.

I praise Thee, I thank Thee, I compassionate Thee, O most holy Saviour! and I grieve that I am so far from following Thy example. Thou lookest on the offences done to Thee as means of practising virtue, while I take all offences done to me merely as motives for resentment. Ah, my Jesus! I do not love Thee—this is all that troubles me. Make me love Thee, and in Thy love I shall find all good. Make me love Thee, and then all incitement to sin will become to me occasions of virtue; and, especially, I shall find helps to humility in those very circumstances which I now turn into occasions of bitterness and pride.

The love that I entertain for my own honor is inordinate. It is not reason, but pride, that makes me feel so acutely the offences which are offered me. When these feelings, there-

fore, come upon me I shall say to myself: *See how proud I am.*

II. The council being finished, and notice having been given of another session early the next morning, the wicked judges return to their homes and take some rest, full of satisfaction at having pronounced the most unjust sentence that ever was heard of in the world. To Jesus Christ, meanwhile, not even a moment of repose is allowed. He remains in the hands of those miscreants, who keep Him tightly bound by way of guarding Him,—and who can form an idea of the insolence and indignities which they heap upon Him throughout the whole of that night, even until the dawn of day? Following the example of their masters, who have used Him so contemptuously, the servants do the same, and worse; some regarding Him with fierce looks, eager to see Him suffer as a blasphemer; others treating Him as a mountebank, a fool, a man of no account, fit only to give them sport and diversion; all of them wondering how thirty pieces of silver could have been given to Judas for one so abject, who could not be worth three farthings.

If He has to be put to death, they might leave Him in peace and spare Him this ill-treatment. But these men, worse than barbarians, urged violently on by their rage, assault Him one after another, with every kind of outrage, so that in the whole world there is nothing reckoned more vile than the Lord and Master of the world. O cruelty unparalleled! And, O patience, also, unexampled! At the instigation of the priests these wretches in every way insult the suffering Jesus—with mockery, with blows and with insolence. He lets them treat Him as they will, and suffers all most meekly.

What sayest thou, my soul? Thou admirest the patience of thy Saviour with the outrageous Jews, and yet this patience continued but a few hours. How much more must thou admire the same Saviour's patience practised for years and years with thyself? O Incarnate Son of God! I have, by sinning, done Thee greater wrong throughout the whole course of my life than the Jews did on that night by mock-

ing Thee. Every time I have committed sin have I not preferred to Thee a vile, fleeting creature, on which I have fixed that love which was entirely due to Thee?

Since I first began to sin I have continued, and I still continue, to offend Thee every day; and what punishments have I not deserved, and do I not still deserve, for the low esteem which until now I have had for Thy divine Majesty? And yet, with what patience hast Thou not constantly endured me? I thank Thee, I adore Thee, I repent of all my sins and ask pardon of Thy mercy, protesting for the time to come that I shall, with Thy assistance, esteem and love Thee above all things. Make me, I beseech Thee, thoroughly comprehend Thy greatness and bounty, which is supremely deserving of love, in order that I may love it with all the power of my heart.

All my sins spring from the inordinate love I have for myself. Therefore I shall reflect, what am I, and what is God? Ah! this *self*, this wretched *self*, is this to be placed in comparison with God in my esteem and love?

III. The first indignity mentioned by the Evangelists as inflicted on Jesus, in the hall of Caiphas, was to spit in His face. This had already been foretold by Him in the discourses which He held with His Apostles on His Passion, saying to them that the Son of Man should be mocked and spit upon by His enemies. Spitting in a man's face is an affront in the highest degree offensive; it expresses nothing but supreme contempt and the utmost detestation, for phlegm is something most foul and disgusting and induces nausea. In good society we are accustomed to turn aside to spit, so that we may not even be remarked; whence, spitting in any one's face denotes that this face is, in the extreme, vile and worthless. Such, then, in the opinion of those men, is the most noble countenance of Jesus Christ, which each of them defiles with his beastly phlegm.

And Jesus, how does He resent an outrage of this sort? He holds His face unmoved, as the Prophet had foreseen, to receive upon it all this filth. Considering, indeed, as He does, the nature of the injury, the baseness and insolence

of those who inflict it, He experiences therefrom the most grievous pain. But at the same time He voluntarily endures it with acts of virtue the most perfect. In His soul He suffers, and at the same time He rejoices, as His enjoyment of bliss has not the effect of preventing His Passion; so, likewise, this same Passion is in no way prevented by the virtue that He practises. In our case virtue serves to mitigate pain, in the case of Jesus Christ it only serves to aggravate it.

Enter, O my soul, into the soul of Jesus and make His thoughts thine own. Who is it that is outraged by being spit upon? The only-begotten Son of God, the brightness of eternal light, the mirror without spot, in which the Majesty of God may be viewed. Who is it that casts on Him this outrage? A lawless, most vile crew of the basest class among the people. To what end does He permit Himself to be thus outraged? Christian soul of mine, thou knowest it well. Jesus Christ allows Himself to be thus spit upon, with such indignity, to save Thee from eternal shame, which thou hast merited by sin. He lets Himself be spit upon to wash thee by this spittle from thy filth.

Unhappy being that I am! How can I remain any longer destitute of love and see myself so loved by my divine Saviour? How can I, so full of pride, contemplate humility like His? My God, I turn to Thee this time once more in prayer. What am I saying—this time,—once more? If Thy infinite goodness is not weary with doing me favors, why should I be weary of asking for them? I ask Thee, therefore, and I shall continue to ask Thee as long as I live, for the grace to love Thee and to be humble; the grace to pray to Thee for this grace, with the affection and fervor that Thou desirest to find in me when I pray.

In imagining to myself the Jews spitting on the face of Jesus Christ, I shall acknowledge that it is I who deserve all this spittle, worthless sinner that I am! I shall, moreover, excite myself to sorrow for my sins.

IV. Let us not abandon Jesus Christ under the shame of that spittle which is cast upon His face. He is afflicted



beyond measure in His soul. There is no man to whom any injury, whatever it be, can occasion such affliction as He feels from each one of these multiplied insults, since no man exists who, with all his pride and arrogance, can form so lively an apprehension of the grievousness of affronts as He forms in His humility. But let us look attentively at His sacred face, thus covered with foul, thick phlegm. King David seems, long before, to have pictured that countenance, saying that among all the sons of men there was no one of aspect so beautiful, so comely, so noble as He. Behold it now, precisely as foreseen by the Prophet Isaias, as that of an infected leper whose natural features can no longer be recognized, all covered over with foul incrustations.

Ye heavens, thou earth, angels, men, are you not horrified at so strange a disfigurement? Look down, O God of glory, O Eternal Father! And is this the face of Thy beloved Son, resplendent as the sun! that face in which a short while before Thou didst take delight on Mount Tabor? But away with this wonder, O my soul! This face of Jesus Christ, all defiled as it is with phlegm, is not a whit less fair and pleasing now than it was when it appeared in the Transfiguration, all dazzling with bright rays of glory. Seest thou not how there shine in it meekness, humility, patience? It is not the beauty of the features, but of virtues, that gives delight to God.

Let us bear in mind that nothing of all that Jesus Christ suffers is through necessity, but by a virtuous choice of His own will. There falls not on His face one discharge of phlegm but what He chooses; and He lays it all by, in the treasury of His Passion, to make more and more plentiful the Redemption of the world. O my Jesus! no less adorable when encompassed by the Jews and covered with phlegm, than Thou art in heaven with angels for Thy retinue, amid the splendors of the saints!

I adore Thee in Thy ignominies, by which Thou hast merited, both for Thy Humanity and ours, an all-glorious eternity. I thank Thee for the unconquerable patience

with which Thou hast endured to be so shamefully disgraced for my love and for my welfare. Ah! my Jesus! Thou hast turned away Thy face neither from the mockeries nor the spittle of the merciless; turn it not, I beseech Thee, away from me. Turn it away from my sins, but not from myself, and impart to me those graces of which I have need for my eternal salvation.

I have, indeed, great need of patience on many occasions that daily occur. On this virtue I shall frequently renew my resolutions, reflecting upon the examples given me by Jesus Christ.

V. Another injury done to Jesus Christ is striking Him with the fist on the neck, the shoulders, the breast, and giving Him buffets on the face. These worthless miscreants take delight in maltreating Him, and contending, one against another, which shall do it the most barbarously. Already He had foretold this by the mouth of the Prophet: *I have given My body to the strikers, and My cheeks to them that plucked them. I have not turned away My face from them that rebuked Me, and spit upon Me.*<sup>1</sup> And oh! how abundantly do we see this prophecy accomplished. No one among men was ever so dishonored and disfigured with bruises, deforming His whole countenance, as was the Redeemer of the world. So that Isaias had good reason to say that no one could meditate on these ignominies without being astounded.

And, in truth, is it not a subject calculated to overwhelm us with amazement to see those inhuman Jews with spitting and blows venting their savage rage on that most sacred face, in whose awful presence the sea grows calm, and the sun shuts its eyes, that it may not behold it? O sacred Face! worthy of the reverence and adoration of the entire world, why remainest thou unabashed and imperturbable in the midst of all these mockeries and insults? Nothing less, surely, than the patience of a God suffered thee to endure them.

But what, beyond all, is a subject of admiration to me is

(<sup>1</sup>) Isaias 1, 6.

that this marvelous patience is exercised by Jesus Christ for me. To me—to me,—on account of my iniquities, was due that furious tempest of spitting, blows and cuffs; and oh! that the King of glory should be content to take my place and subject Himself for me to sufferings so painful and so ignominious; for me, His most unworthy, most ungrateful creature! O my soul! redeemed by thy Lord with so much love, lift up thy voice and invite all nations to unite with thee in praising and magnifying the divine Goodness.

We know a man by looking in his face. What then have we to do but to look now at the face of Jesus Christ in order to know Him as Our Saviour. Ah, yes, my Jesus! when I look on Thee so brutally injured in Thy face, which is the most honorable part of Thy body, and see Thee all the while so meek, so patient, so humble, I acknowledge Thee, I proclaim Thee, I adore Thee as my Saviour. By the merits of all Thy virtues I beseech Thee to be truly and in effect a Saviour to me. Grant that I may save myself, and since I shall never save myself unless I resolve to imitate Thee, inspire me with those holy resolutions which Thou knowest to be necessary for me and give me strength worthily to fulfil them.

I shall make a particular resolution to endure, for the love of Jesus Christ, contradictions and offences, as He endured so many and such grievous trials for me. This is what He teaches me, and what is requisite for my salvation.

VI. The Jews are enraged that Jesus Christ should be patient and gentle under their ill-usage, making no complaints, showing no irritation nor disgust. They do not know that He bears it all by His own free will; and they grow more and more furious and revengeful at His patience and meekness. These impious wretches exert their perverse ingenuity to invent new modes of manifesting their contempt, but the heroic virtue of Jesus continues undiminished. They now take a soiled rag, which they throw over His head to cover His face; then, with loud bursts of laughter, they jeer and make game of Him, and striking Him,

they say insultingly: *Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck Thee?*<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Lord of the Prophets is derided as if He were a false Prophet; the Master of wisdom and the Director of the wise is treated as if He were a fool. That God who searches hearts and bestows the spirit of prophecy on whom He will, how can He be ignorant who it is that strikes Him? And yet they make game and sport of Him as if He were a clown, an ignoramus, a fool. O my soul! wilt thou not weep to behold the Son of the Most High reduced to so miserable a condition? If He was filled with sadness in the garden at the prospect of these mockeries, and therefore prayed to be delivered from them, what must be His affliction now that He experiences them?

Suffering Jesus! from the bottom of my heart I compassionate Thee, and when on the one hand I consider Thy pains, on the other Thy virtues, I am confounded to see myself so bad a Christian, one who can not do himself the least violence to imitate Thy example. Thou hadst but to will it and Thou mightest, in a moment, avenge Thyself on these wretches who so outrage Thee, by commanding the earth and hell to open their mouth and swallow them. And yet Thou dost prefer to suffer and to be silent, as the weakest and most helpless man in the world. And I, with this Thy example before my eyes, how do I act? Oftentimes I have humility on my lips and pride in my heart. I expect others to have patience with me, and I refuse to have it with others. I feel keenly everything which hurts my reputation and my honor. I can not endure nor withhold a single word, nor overcome human respect, for Thy love. Ah, my Jesus! give me that meekness which Thou hast practically taught me so well by Thy example. I desire to imitate Thee herein, and I beg and entreat Thee for those helps which Thou hast merited for me. I hope for them, and I also hope for that efficacious assistance that will cause me to coöperate with them.

Inasmuch as I desire to be blessed, I shall cherish in my

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 68.



heart the *Beatitudes* preached and practised by Jesus Christ. Blessed are the humble, blessed are the meek, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are they who suffer patiently for the love of God.

VII. Let us stand still, my soul, and reflect on Jesus Christ with His face thus muffled. The reason that the Jews have it covered in this manner is because they can no longer endure that modesty, that sweetness and serenity which, with their beams, pierce and begin to soften their hearts. They wish to ill-treat Him freely, without restraint, and therefore they veil His face that they may not be checked in their exertions by those rays of grace and benignity that proceed from it. What strange and monstrous wickedness, to hate the patience of God, and to be in fear of grace lest it touch our heart! But with regard to Jesus Christ Himself, what is His design in suffering His face to be covered? It is that He may remove from us the darksome veil of ignorance and concupiscence that wretchedly overhangs and keeps us from the sight of the things of God. Oh, what obligations have we to Our Saviour's mercy that has merited for us so great an abundance of graces, inspirations, and lights!

But unhappily, we, like the Jews, purposely hide from ourselves the divine presence, renewing, as far as in us lies, the very same mockeries that Jesus Christ suffered at their hands. Whatever may be the case with others, I shall speak for myself. I have covered up and struck blows at the face of Jesus Christ every time that I have given a rein to my passions and consented to sin. On those occasions I have acted as if God were not present to behold me. From the neglect of keeping the divine presence has arisen every one of the disorders of my life. But, blind that I am! do I imagine that because I have not chosen to think of God, therefore God has not had eyes to observe me?

O my God! I repent of my wickedness and implore Thy pardon. I beseech Thee to confirm me in the faith of Thy adorable presence. I believe, O Lord! that as by Thy eternity Thou dost exist at all times, so by Thy immensity



Thou art in all places. I believe that by Thy essence Thou art within me and without me; that Thou seest all that I do, and hast the same attention to search out and mark all that passes within me as if I were alone in the world. Yes, Thou seest me. I believe this of Thee as of my God and my Judge, who requires no witnesses to inform Him of the truth. Thou art present within me in every place, even the most retired; in every hour, even the most darksome. I bear Thee within me in every faculty of my soul, in every sense of my body; and I can do nothing but what is done in the presence of Thy Majesty, that sees me, that penetrates me, and that is within me more truly than I am within myself. Ah, my Jesus, most holy! grant that these sentiments of faith may be continually impressed upon my soul; then I shall have need of no other curb to restrain me from evil, of no other spur to animate me to good.

The secret of my eternal salvation lies in the practice of the presence of God. Therefore I shall form the constant habit of this exercise of faith. *God is present with me, and He sees me.* He is without excuse who neglects to make it.

VIII. No tongue can describe what Jesus Christ suffered during the remainder of that night, in the house of Caiphas. Hence St. Luke, after mentioning the spitting and blows and mockeries, concludes by saying that the Jews continued to insult and torment Him in many other ways, especially with a load of blasphemies. To understand all the patience that He practised beyond that that can be related, it suffices to contemplate Him in such a condition as will respond fully to what is said by the Prophets, that He is truly of all men the most despised, the most lightly esteemed, as if He were the last of the sons of Adam; a man made for ignominy as a worm of the dunghill, who is no longer reputed as a man, who is the reproach of men and the byword of the people; or, as it were, a brute beast. In fine, a man beneath all men; so humbled, so inglorious, that His abjection brings Him to the confines of nothingness.<sup>1</sup>

(<sup>1</sup>) *Isaias lii.*

The Prophets and the Evangelists have assiduously recorded concerning Our Saviour many circumstances of ignominy, and they have not been ashamed to make them known. They have done this, as well on account of esteeming it exceedingly glorious to God to set forth to what a point He has carried His charity by choosing to suffer such things for us, as also considering it advantageous to us that we might in this way be animated to admire and to return thanks unceasingly to the Man-God for all the pains and reproaches that He has deigned to endure for our eternal salvation; at the same time, that we might learn not only not to be ashamed, but moreover to glory and be comforted if we are judged worthy to follow His example in being treated as He was.

Therefore I thank Thee, most loving Jesus! for all the pains, in body and soul, that Thou hast undergone for me, and I pray Thee graciously to accept these my thanks although they be offered with a spirit and a heart so pusillanimous and lukewarm. I long to imitate Thee in bearing contempt and humiliation for Thy sake. I know that from one hour to another these occasions may unexpectedly arise, and shall I in that case have the resolution to carry out what I now desire? My God, I distrust myself and trust in Thee! Prepare my heart that I may no longer account humility to be meanness, but that it may rather be my glory. Strengthen my feeble spirit, for I shall never be courageous in any encounter whatever unless Thou givest me courage.

I shall reflect well on what Jesus Christ has suffered for me, and by this thought I shall dispose myself, on my part, to suffer something for Him. If I find, after all, that I am not so disposed, I shall at least humble myself to detest my pride and ingratitude.

IX. Jesus Christ suffered much during this night from the malice of men, but not less, also, from that of the princes of darkness; divine Wisdom having ordained that the infernal enemies should exert all their efforts against Him in order that they might be conquered and

confounded by our nature, which they had esteemed weak, but would now find too strong for them. The Saviour's purpose is to fortify us against all the artifices of the devil, and as it is by the artifice of the devil that we are so exceedingly sensitive and weak in regard to our honor that we can not bear an affront, and exaggerate to ourselves every trifle until it appears to be something great, He has been pleased to suffer every species of dishonor and ignominy that the devil could invent, in order that we might become strong to overcome all his temptations.

In opposition to every injury that He receives Jesus Christ exercises every kind of virtue; not, indeed, one after another as we might do, but by the immense capacity of His mind He exercises them all at once and without intermission—nature, grace, habitual virtue, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost,—all producing their effects in an incomprehensible manner, with the utmost degree of energy and perfection. He apprehends every injury in a way to exaggerate its bitterness to the utmost degree, and at the same time making an act of humility, an act of love, of obedience, of resignation to His Father, an act of charity toward us, of sorrow for our sins, of oblation and of prayer for us. He goes on every moment repeating these and other most perfect acts of virtue,—at the same time applying to our advantage the infinite amount of all His merits in such a manner that the exercise of virtue, by the powers of His soul, is in no ways prevented or checked by the afflictions and infirmities of sense.

O Jesus, how many are the virtues of Thy soul! How many vices are in mine! I acknowledge myself most unworthy to remain in Thy presence, and I would wish that I might be allowed to take that veil which hides the beauty of Thy countenance, in order with it to cover all my deformities so hateful to Thy Majesty. Yet what veil can conceal anything from Thy all-penetrating eyes? I ought to think of cleansing, not of covering myself. And who can cleanse me if not Thou, by the application of Thy merits and the infusion of Thy love? It is the property of love to purify

the soul in one moment from its loathsomeness. Grant me, then, I pray Thee, this love, that through it my sins may be pardoned and my soul may be fortified, so that I may never again offend Thee.

I will love my God, and with this love I shall vanquish every vice and every temptation, especially that inordinate love that I cherish for honor and esteem.

X. Although, at His apprehension, Jesus was abandoned by all His friends, he was, nevertheless, followed by St. Peter and another disciple, who is thought to have been St. John. The latter, entering into the hall of the high-priest, was a spectator of all that happened to His divine Master, and it may be piously believed that he returned to give an account thereof to the Blessed Virgin. Behold, then, my soul, the Mother of Jesus filled with anguish! Reflect with what grief her heart must have been inundated at the description that St. John gives of all that had been done against the person of her beloved Son,—first in the garden, then in the house of Annas, and later on in that of Caiphas.

What sighs, what sobs, what pangs of grief! That loving Mother seems to be present at all she hears, and in mournful accents she breaks forth to address at one time her Son, at another, the angels. A cold sweat and a death-like pallor appear on her countenance; a sign of that racking sorrow foretold by the Prophet Simeon, which, as a sword, passes through her very soul. But she is not troubled nor disquieted; and, penetrating with a divine light what passes in the interior of her Son, she unites herself to Him by a perfect imitation. She bows to the decree of man's Redemption; and, as at the time of the Incarnation, she again testifies her acceptance of it: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word."<sup>1</sup> By heroic acts she endeavors to practise the virtues of her Son, and in the ardor of a most tender compassion she makes His sufferings her own, and applies and offers them to the Eternal Father for us.

O Mother, of all mothers the most blessed and the most

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke i, 38.



afflicted, what obligations do I not owe thee! And oh, how ungrateful should I be if I did not correspond with thy love! I blush at the thought that, since thou hast suffered so much for me, I have not even the heart to compassionate thee. Ah, Mary! thou seest that I am altogether insensible to thy sorrows, but do thou render me sensible of them by imparting to me a portion of thy love. Grant, at least, that I may weep instead of thee over the Passion of thy Son; for it behooveth me to weep, rather than thee, since thou art all pure and innocent and I am that sinner on whose account Jesus suffers. Mother of Mercy, if I can not compassionate thee, do thou use compassion toward me and with thine eyes of mercy look on me in my spiritual miseries, which are many and extreme, and vouchsafe to grant me thy assistance.

Having already chosen Mary for my spiritual Patroness, I shall now adopt her as my special Advocate, in order to obtain for me those graces that are requisite to render the meditation of Our Lord's Passion fruitful to myself.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE JEWS HOLD A COUNCIL FOR THE CONDEMNATION OF JESUS.

I. THAT night so painful to Our Lord having run its course, the chief priests, the doctors of the law, and the ancients of the people, reassemble at dawn of day to form a public and general council against the innocent Jesus. The consultation held the preceding night, amidst tumult and uproar, had not the form of justice. Hence they meet again, in order that the procedure may seem to be according to law and equity, and that they may not be accused of acting unjustly. It is probable that, instead of sleeping, they had been plotting how they might effect the condemnation of Jesus; and now there is no necessity that Caiphas



should send to hasten their arrival, for no sooner has day dawned than they are on the alert.

The eagerness they have to make away with Jesus by means of false accusations proceeds entirely from the hatred they harbor against Him, and this hatred has no other motive than that, by His example and His doctrine, He has been a reproof to their ambition and hypocrisy. They hate Him, not by reason of any hateful quality they have discovered in Him, but solely that for the glory of God He has announced the truth to them. Unreasonable, perverse hatred!

But, my soul, does not this take place every hour? Jesus Christ is hated by all sinners in regard to that virtue in Him which is opposed to their peculiar vice. The proud hate Jesus in His humility, the revengeful hate Him in His meekness and charity, the unchaste in His purity. And, to speak in general, He is hated in His light and truth by all bad Christians who yield themselves a prey to the dark deeds of sin.

O Jesus, true Light, holy Truth, how long have I also continued to hate Thee! For all these years during which I have persevered in my vicious course it may, with truth, be said that I have actually hated Thee, since I have persecuted Thee in Thy virtues, in Thy counsels, and in Thy commandments. And since I have dedicated myself to Thy service, oh, how much has this heart of mine been inclined rather to hate than to love Thee! With my lips I profess to love Thee, but in reality I love Thee not, for when I am called upon to obey Thee, I am slothful and sluggish, but when the gratification of some passion is the object, I am all haste and eagerness. I repent of my perfidy; and, O most loving Saviour! who hast pity even on those who love Thee not, deign to have mercy on me and grant me grace to make amends for the baseness of my past life by a holy fervor in Thy love. Never shall I love Thee as I ought if I love not also Thy virtues. Make me, then, love Thee practically. I shall on all occasions endeavor to moderate the violence of my passions, and I shall have as much care and

earnest solicitude now to do good as I formerly had to do evil.

II. A council being convened early on Friday morning, Jesus is summoned to it in order to undergo a fresh examination. A resolution has already been decided upon that He shall die, that thus His doctrine, His faith, and His name may be at once wholly suppressed. But actually having no sufficient evidence against Him, they now make their last effort to elicit something like it. The suffering Redeemer enters then into the presence of the impious judges, dragged forward by brutal officers. Stay, my soul, to behold His divine face,—it is livid, swollen, and disfigured by the cruel treatment He has received during the night.

The heart of every one of the judges is hard as a stone, and as a smith's anvil, without the slightest feeling of compassion or pity for Jesus; whilst the Heart of Jesus, as a burning torch, spreads flames of love on every side. They devise injustice and malice in order to outrage and oppress the innocence of Jesus, and Jesus humbly presents His afflictions to His Eternal Father and commits His cause to His hands. To Him does He resign Himself, in Him He trusts, and He seeks no other glory than His.

O my soul! how beautiful it is blindly to resign oneself into the hands of God's providence, and heedless of the vicissitudes of the world, however painful they may be, to commit oneself to the divine protection, to trust in the Almighty for support and to allow Him, according to His good pleasure, to dispose of us in all things as regards our soul and body, our honor and worldly goods, life and death, time and eternity. This is the virtue that Jesus teaches us in order that we may enjoy the sweetness of Paradise even in this valley of tears. But oh, how little of this virtue is there in my heart! I possess not even the shadow of it.

To Thee, then, O my Jesus! do I humbly have recourse, that Thou mayest give me strength to practise it. Ah, my God, "my hope from the breast of my mother," in whom can I trust if I trust not in Thee, who wishest me all good?

On Thee do I cast my care in all events, and as I desire solely to please Thee, to Thee do I commend myself in all and for all, being well persuaded that whatever shall be Thy dispositions in my regard they will be for the best. I fear lest my present determination should not be persevering. But for this also do I look to Thee that Thou wilt, in Thy goodness, confirm my instability.

I shall forecast all the circumstances that may occur to cause me anguish, and I shall make renewed acts of confidence in God to meet all adversities, spiritual or corporal, be they what they may.

III. Neither Lucifer nor any one else has ever been able to discover the shadow of a fault in Jesus, but the Jews are determined to find Him guilty of a capital crime, expiatory only by death. Therefore, they urge Him to declare whether or not He is the Christ,—that is, the King of Israel promised by God to David,—in order that, in case He replies in the affirmative, they may have matter to accuse Him before Pilate as a usurper of the kingly power and guilty of a crime which threatens the well-being of the State. But what reply does Jesus give? *Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*<sup>1</sup> Oh, words of Truth eternal, calculated to produce profound impression and terror! However, these men find in them only the occasion of fresh transports of rage, and hearing that Jesus will come in the majesty of a Judge they thus insultingly address Him: *Art Thou then the Christ the Son of the blessed God?*<sup>2</sup> Observe their affected blindness. They have light enough to infer that because He is the Judge of the world, He must consequently be God. Yet, they have not the perception thence to conclude that He must be adored and feared. They might and they ought to have believed in Him; but they would not, in order that they might not feel themselves constrained by His Gospel to break those bonds which link them to their vicious passions.

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 64. (<sup>2</sup>) St. Mark xiv, 61.

Oh, unhappy the soul that, by a just judgment of God, has reached the point of not fearing the judgment of God! A terrible infliction is this, followed afterward by impenitence, obstinacy, and damnation. I should then reflect upon myself and provide against my own danger. Do I really believe that truth of faith, that Jesus Christ is to come in power and majesty to judge me? Do I frequently call it to mind in order to fear it and to regulate my life according to it?

Ah, my Jesus! Thou seest my supine neglect. And how can I hope that Thou wilt be my Saviour if I fear Thee not as my Judge? Give me lively faith and great fear, that in all I say or do or think I may represent to myself Thy justice as if before my eyes. In granting me this Thy mercy will be exceedingly great. Grant me now to know the number and the enormity of my sins, and let my heart be penetrated with this sentiment: What shall become of me, laden as I am with iniquity, when Thou shalt come to judge me? Thou wert pleased to be judged by men to render me secure in Thy own divine and awful judgment. In order, then, that I may be grateful to Thee, grant me to appreciate so immense a benefit.

The fruit to be derived from fear should be sorrow for the past and a resolution to make better use of the time to come. The judgment of God will be rigorous, and rigorous should I be in examining myself.

IV. To the question addressed to Him whether He be the Son of God, Our Saviour answers with earnestness and confirms the truth of what they themselves had said. Then all—priests, Scribes, and ancients—cry out as if in frenzy: *He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy.*<sup>1</sup> And with unanimous accord, without one even to speak in His favor, they pronounce Him guilty and deserving of death, as the Prophets had long before predicted.

What an atrocity, to judge worthy of death that life which is the most precious of all lives and the very source

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvi, 65.

of life itself, from which all who live derive their life ! The devils, with fear and trembling, have acknowledged Jesus to be their Judge and their God ; and shall the Jews, for the very reason that He declares Himself their Judge and their God, call Him a seducer, a blasphemer, and, consequently, condemn Him to death ? Justly does the revelation of the highest mysteries made to them by Our Saviour turn to their greater condemnation.

But let us not be incensed against the Jews. When Jesus hears the unjust sentence, does He resent it ? Does He make any appeal, or claim time to make His defence ? With humble prudence, and prudent humility, He remains silent and bows to the most just decree of His Eternal Father. But to Thee, O Eternal Father, with profound submission do I turn. It is I who have sinned. I am that wretch who has merited death. And what evil has Thy most innocent Son done ? Ah, let Thy hand be turned against me and let Thy Son be spared !

I speak of myself ; that is, of this old man, whom I have within me in my rebellious appetites ; of that man that transgressed in Adam, the enemy and contemner of God, the worshipper of self, the lover of the world, the slave of the flesh and of the devil. Yes, this man, O my soul ! if thou art wise, denounce as worthy of death. And do Thou, O my God, strengthen me to mortify, subject, and annihilate him, since he is so proud and insolent that he would fain make war even against Thee. Thou knowest what I mean by this my inward man, which is a monstrous compound of sin, vice, and irregular passions. Let the rebel die, who deserves a thousand deaths, and let Jesus, who is worthy of eternal life, live in His most sacred Humanity ; and let my soul also live, having been created and redeemed by Thee to enjoy Thee throughout an eternity of glory.

This old man, this son of Adam, is destroyed by sincere penitence of heart, mortification of the senses and renunciation of self-will. Therefore, I shall now renew my resolutions.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

## JESUS DENIED BY ST. PETER.

I. **AT** the same time that Jesus is overwhelmed with insults and blows, in the house of Caiphas, He suffers a shameful disgrace by the thrice-repeated denial of Peter. A few hours previously this Apostle was forewarned by Our Saviour of what would befall him. Three times did He admonish him in the garden to prepare for temptation, and precisely three times did he miserably fall. For, being asked on three different occasions whether he was a disciple of Jesus, he boldly answers in the negative. Then, to gain credit for his denial, he breaks out into furious oaths and imprecations, and protests that he knows not even who the Man is.

This is what St. Peter says of his own accord, though no one is near to terrify him or to force him to it by authority or threats, but simply in reply to the questions of two silly women and of an idle and insignificant servant. What would the bystanders say to such a reply, many of them having observed him passing through the city in company with Jesus; and, but a short time before, having seen him in the garden with Him? In such circumstances the world is wont to judge the worst.

Consider, O my soul, how this must have redounded to the dishonor of Jesus; for as inquiry was being made for evidence against Him to prove that He was a wicked man, was it not strong evidence to hear Peter speak as if he were ashamed and grieved for having been of the number of His followers? But let us reflect. If it is said of Peter that he denied Christ by denying that he was His disciple, how many are there amongst Christians who, worse than Peter, deny Him continually by their wicked life, giving the lie to their Christian profession.

I am one of these, O my most adorable Saviour! who have perfidiously denied Thee, not three times only, but as often as I have sinned mortally by the transgression of Thy holy commands. Peter denied Thee only through incon-

stancy and frailty, and not with his heart but solely with his lips. But I have denied Thee through actual malice. I have denied Thee in word and in deed, and even with my heart, by deliberately consenting to sin and fixing my affections thereon. Oh, what cause have I, therefore, to annihilate myself in humility! Ah, my Jesus, let my iniquities make me see how vile I am. One fruit that I shall derive from Thy Passion shall be that a knowledge of sin will make me humble.

I shall dwell upon the consideration of the nature and number of my sins in order to exercise myself in acts of sorrow and humility. The more I have sinned, the more contrite and humble I ought to be.

II. Jesus stands in the council-hall, whilst Peter denies Him at the entrance without. Still with His divine spirit He sees all that befalls His Apostle. He sees his denials and the perjuries that accompany them; and that, since they are mortal sins, they deprive him of the grace of God. If the mere forecast of them in the garden caused Our Saviour such deep affliction and horror, what must His loving Heart have felt when they took place?

Jesus is a prisoner and an object of derision, whilst Peter swears, and falsely swears, that he knows Him not. He opens not His mouth to complain of the injuries and sufferings He endures, yet He can not refrain from bitterly lamenting, through His Prophets, the conduct of Peter, as though He would say: That My enemies should abuse Me by words and deeds is not a subject of wonder, for it is nothing but what I might expect from their envy, now degenerated into mortal hatred; but that thou, O Peter, My intimate friend and My companion, chosen by Me to be the guide of the Faithful, that thou, instead of yielding up thy life for the confession of My name, shouldst go so far as to deny Me! Oh, this is what afflicts Me and goes to My very Heart! It pierces Me to the quick to behold Myself abandoned by all My friends. But that thou, Peter, the most beloved of all, shouldst deny Me and slight Me! These three denials are so many nails that attach Me to a

more painful cross than that which the Jews are preparing for Me.

Thus, we may imagine, does Jesus grieve over Peter, and He grieves also over me who am no less present to His memory. O my Jesus! I believe that Thou wert indeed more afflicted by my sins than by all the ill-usage that Thou didst receive at the hands of the Jews. Sufferings, I know, are dear to Thee and sweet, as they are the desired objects of Thy love; but sin, because it is opposed to Thy immense charity, I know to be hateful to Thee, and especially my sins, as they are unspeakably the most grievous. I weigh the grievousness of my offences by the greatness and multitude of the benefits Thou hast conferred upon me. Oh, how many and how great are the favors Thy mercy has lavished upon me! And oh, how grievous also are my sins, stamped as they are with the mark of the basest ingratitude! Ah, my Saviour, grant me to appreciate the value of those graces with which Thou hast befriended and honored me, and thus I shall moreover be enabled to know the excess of my malice in committing sin; and then, with such lights, my cold heart can not but be animated to love Thee and to grieve for having offended Thee.

Frequently I lament that I have no sentiment of love toward God, nor of sorrow for my sins. Behold, then, what I must do. I shall meditate upon the immensity of the divine beneficence in my regard.

III. Who could imagine that Peter, who but a short time before had confessed the Divinity of the Saviour, and had protested that he would rather die than offend Him, should now deny Him, driven thereto by the voice of a contemptible maid-servant? Who could have imagined that Peter, preferred by His Master to the other Apostles and appointed the head and pillar of the Church, should thus hasten from one fall to another into the deep abyss of impiety, and deserve, in punishment of his denial, to be denied by his Saviour in the presence of His Eternal Father?

Oh, dreadful subject of consideration! Even children, for confessing Christ, are destined afterward to enter into

heaven adorned with the crown of martyrdom; and Peter, who holds the keys of the heavenly kingdom, by an act of his own will, as far as regards what he now deserves shuts the door upon himself. He can not be excused from the guilt of mortal sin; with the utmost astonishment we must avow it. And how is it possible that so great a sin should be committed, even by the Prince of the Apostles? How could it be? It would seem that not even the Evangelists themselves who have given us the account could comprehend it. Nevertheless, it is as true as the Gospel.

And what inference may we draw from this? None other than the following: Behold how weak is our nature in itself if God does but for a moment withdraw from us His divine assistance. What happened to Peter may at any time happen to another, however spiritual and perfect or how far advanced in sanctity he may be. Much more easily may the same befall me, who have in myself no mark whatever of sanctity.

Ah, my God! without Thy helping hand and Thy grace what am I but what Peter was when he denied and again denied, when he swore and swore again, that he did not so much as know the Saviour of the world? Peter had acquired many virtues in the school of His divine Master, but they were of no avail to support him the very first moment that virtue from on high failed him. And what then can I hope from myself, wretched and miserable as I am, devoid of all virtues and talents? When I see a St. Peter fall, filled with dread, I humble myself before Thee, O Lord, and I exclaim: Have pity on me, and help me, for what iniquity may I not commit if Thy assistance fails me?

I shall conceive a fear of myself on account of my liability to run headlong into mortal sin when I least suspect it, and I shall supplicate the divine assistance through the merits of Christ.

IV. Doubtless the primary cause of Peter's fall must have been some secret pride. For, ordinarily speaking, a man indulges pride in some shape or other before he falls headlong into the abyss of sin. There is no doubt that



pride is so displeasing to God, that He permits these disastrous falls that it may be humbled and in this manner cured. In fact, Peter had that very night proudly boasted of himself as if he were impeccable, or as if no temptation were able to overcome him. God then permits him, as a just punishment of his three acts of presumption, to fall into these three denials of his Lord.

In the time of fervor Peter felt strong, and without any reference to God, from whom all strength proceeds, he placed reliance upon the good dispositions of his own heart. Behold the outcome of his vain confidence: he is terrified by a mere woman,—he whose boast was that he feared not the whole world. He who thought himself able to undergo a thousand deaths for Christ, even he denies Him. For this reason all the Evangelists have given us the account of Peter's fall that it might serve as a lesson to teach us never to boast of ourselves and never to reckon upon our weak nature, but always to place our whole confidence in God, since it is God alone who, by His grace, can strengthen us.

I have frequently experienced in myself proofs of that truth which is now the subject of my consideration. How often, O my God, when I thought myself solidly grounded in virtue have I found myself unsteady, and have I fallen! And when I imagined I could advance in perfection by my own endeavors, how have I retrograded! My weakness has never been more evident than when I presumed upon my strength, and never have I had so clear a knowledge of my poverty, my folly, and my nothingness than when I have entertained a good opinion of myself and have regarded myself as of some account. For then it is that my falls have taught me, to my cost, what I am.

Vouchsafe, O my God! to engrave in my soul a practical and sensible conviction that of myself I am good-for-nothing. For only in proportion to my knowledge of my own vileness, frailty, and nothingness shall I be induced to rely upon Thy infinite goodness. Give sight to my eyes by putting upon them the clay of my own baseness and deformity, that from knowing the greatness of my wicked-



ness I may rise also to the knowledge of my immense misery and of Thy more than boundless mercy.

I shall reflect upon the vice of presumption, which is so little regarded and, nevertheless, so fatal. As often as I form or express my intention of doing anything, I shall accustom myself always to add, *With the help of God*.

V. Ordinarily no one falls all at once from an ardent love of God into mortal sin, but he first prepares the way by some negligence and tepidity in his devotions. The devil does not tempt a man at first to commit grievous sins, but he artfully draws him from a less sin to a greater. This we may observe in Peter's case. He first of all gives a simple denial, then he accompanies that denial with a false oath, and finally adds maledictions and execrations upon himself. But how did he come to such an excess as to deny his Lord? Sloth, laziness, curiosity, pusillanimity—sure signs of a fatal tepidity,—had predisposed him to the commission of a mortal sin. Here we may reflect that to overcome a tepid soul any slight temptation is sufficient.

A short while ago Peter had slept, when he ought to have been engaged in prayer. He had been occupied in listening to the insipid talk that was carried on at the fire, and instead of compassionating Our Saviour's sufferings he stood there under the influence of nothing but a mere natural curiosity, waiting to see the end of the trial. Depressed in mind, he was afraid of being asked who he was; and having had courage to follow his Master so long as He wrought miracles, even in the garden, when he sees His honors turned into dishonors he becomes dispirited. He behaves as is usual in the world, where men are faithful to their friends in prosperity and then in adversity disown them.

A soul thus lukewarm can not be long without mortal sin, since through its own fault the helps of grace are gradually removed; and such being precisely my tepidity, what unhappy forebodings may I not make for myself? I blush, O my God! and I am confounded. I tremble at the consideration of the miserable state of my soul, which is alto-

gether full of slothfulness, laziness, curiosity, and pusillanimity, easily led to omit prayer and other devotions, slow to good, prone to evil, a slave to passion, devoid of every virtue, dominated by every species of vice.

I behold myself on the brink of a precipice,—perhaps even an eternal one. Ah, my Lord! stretch out to me Thy helping hand. I have not deserved Thy assistance; nay, rather, I deserve to be abandoned and to become a prey to sin; but take pity on me. I have confidence in Thy love, and by this Thy love I entreat Thee to warm my cold and icy heart, so that this tepidity being conquered I may in very truth love Thee above all things with my whole heart. The sacred fire of this love can alone enkindle within me that fervor which is now wanting.

Tepidity is an evil of which the tepid soul itself is not aware. I shall humble myself, then, and deplore my blindness; for being, as I am, most tepid, I do not recognize myself as such.

VI. The sin of St. Peter is a salutary instruction for one who desires to continue in the grace of God. Let us examine the reasons why Jesus permitted His Apostle to fall, and among others let us be on our guard against the following: Peter was severe in his zeal toward his neighbor. He had little of that sweetness and mildness without which a man can not compassionate a sinner, nor help him to rise. He thought that all those who had had a part in the apprehension of his Master ought to be punished without mercy. Therefore, by a wise disposition of divine Providence, Peter, himself the first of the Apostles, was allowed to fall into sin once, twice, and even three times, that he might learn from his own experience to mitigate his severity in regard to others, to show compassion and exercise mercy and charity.

But this happened, not simply that Peter might learn a lesson. The lesson is for ourselves as well. We must learn from the example of Peter. We all are children of Adam, weak and frail, fashioned out of the same clay; and when we chance to hear that such a one has fallen into some

grievous sin, we must reflect that the same, ere long, may be our case. We all have within us that other servant, our flesh; and without us, the devils who tempt us to deny Christ by sin. Therefore we should compassionate one another and mortify those fits of zeal, lest we should meet with falls more ruinous than his.

I am greatly bound to thank Thee, O my God! for that school of humility which Thou hast opened to me in the fall of Thy Apostle Peter. I have likewise to thank Thee for another similar school which Thou hast opened to me in myself. For how often has it happened that I have fallen in a moment into those identical defects which I have not regarded in others with compassion? Yet how obtuse are my will and understanding, that I should never learn either like a wise man, at the expense of others; nor like a fool, at my own.

I acknowledge that I am a man like other men, subject to miseries through frailty and malice no less than others; and yet, full of arrogant zeal, I esteem myself superior to others as if I were not, like them, capable of every kind of iniquity, and whilst I exact from all charity toward myself, I have not one particle of charity for others. Ah, my God! infuse into my heart a holy humility and charity toward my neighbor. Thou seest my need. Without these two essential virtues how can I attain to salvation? The foundation of charity is humility, and why shall I not learn from so many falls, unhappily experienced in myself, to be humble?

I shall purpose never to be scandalized at any one, however abandoned and dissolute he may be. I shall compassionate and excuse him, and exercise that charity which I wish to be exercised toward myself in similar circumstances, that I know may actually occur.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## MERCY OF JESUS CHRIST TOWARD ST. PETER.

I. *WHILST* Peter denies Jesus Christ for the third time the cock crows, and he perceives to be fulfilled, not what the presumptuous disciple had said—that he would rather die than deny his Master,—but what the divine Master had predicted, that His unhappy disciple would three times deny Him. However, he does not continue in his sin; he immediately repents. And why does he repent? Not because he has three times repeated his denial, nor because the cock has crowed, but because Jesus has graciously regarded him with an eye of mercy. Behold the cause of Peter's repentance. He is converted from his sin, and he turns to Jesus, because Jesus first turns to him by His grace.

Peter, who is in mortal sin, an enemy of the divine Majesty, liable to the eternal torments of hell, may do all he likes by his mere natural strength to escape from his unhappy state, but of himself alone he will succeed in doing nothing. He must be enlightened and animated and aided by God with His grace. This is an incontestable truth in every case. As any one can kill himself by his own power but can not of himself come to life again, so can he also by sin give death to his own soul, but he can not by his own power alone raise it again from death. Oh, how great, then, was the goodness of Jesus toward Peter! For, though He had been offended by him and had no need of him, He takes the first step to seek him, to call him, to assist him, and all for no other object than to save him. Had Jesus not regarded him with pity what would have become of him?

Rather shall I say, O my Jesus! reflecting upon myself, what would now have been my lot hadst Thou not been merciful to me who have fallen not three times, like Peter, but times without number into sins of habitual malice? Thou knowest that I should forever have remained blind in my most miserable state hadst Thou not enlightened me and raised me up, and had I died in the act of sinning I

should have been forthwith precipitated into hell. And why, even now, am I not burning in those flames? I am indebted to Thy goodness alone, which has prevented me with the grace of repentance and in this way preserved me. Therefore, I must acknowledge that Thou hast delivered me from death more than a hundred and a thousand times; whilst, had it been Thy pleasure, Thou mightest at any moment have most justly condemned me.

My God! what need hadst Thou of me to cause Thee to shower upon me so many graces? None. What merit had I with Thee? None; for I was an abyss of darkness, a child of wrath, a vessel of perdition. This I acknowledge; and with all my heart I adore and thank Thy mercies, which are, in my regard, innumerable and boundless. To so many graces add, I pray Thee, this also—that I may be grateful to Thee and never offend Thee more, and that I may, by a proportionately greater favor, compensate for all that time during which I ought to have loved Thee above all things and yet did not love Thee.

I shall impress upon my mind this truth, which is the foundation of humility, that in things appertaining to my eternal salvation I am good-for-nothing at all. In all things I stand in need of assistance, and every assistance is a supernatural gift of God.

II. The mercy of Our Saviour is, in every respect, admirable. He is kept a prisoner, surrounded by soldiers and servants who cease not to torment and maltreat Him, and yet He has the conversion of His fallen Apostle at heart. He is calumniated by the priests, accused by false witnesses, beaten and insulted by brutal officers, and He is so overwhelmed with all these afflictions that His Heart can not escape being weighed down with most bitter anguish; at the same time, His trial must be carried on, which was of such importance and, as far as He was concerned, regarded His honor and His life. This trial is in the hands of judges who are His most cruel enemies. Nevertheless, as if insensible to His own interests and to His own sufferings, and as if the disgrace of the sin into which Peter had



fallen was His greatest affliction, He thinks not of procuring deliverance or relief for Himself, but, with His Heart speaking through His eyes, He shows how oppressed He is with His anxious care for Peter's salvation.

Contemplate, O my soul, the charity of Jesus. When, with tears in His eyes, He recalled Lazarus from the grave He forced the bystanders to admire His tender love. But must not His love for Peter be admired as still more tender when, with tears of commiseration, He recalls him from the state of sin? And yet more tender still has it been toward us when with those same eyes He has, not once only, but continually called us, and even yet calls us.

My God, how many loving regards hast Thou cast upon me up to this date, calling me and enlightening me and inviting me by Thy holy inspirations! Every time that I have approached the Sacrament of Penance, who gave me strength to grieve for my sins and to confess them? Who previously excited me to rise and to amend my life? Who but Thyself, with Thy look of most tender mercy? O goodness, O charity, that Thy exalted Majesty should deign to cast a look upon such a worm of corruption! I was blind, and, in love with my blindness, I was pleased to continue in darkness. Who has enlightened me but Thou, who, in Thy mercy, didst come to seek me before I had sought Thee; to call me, and to assist me before I had called on Thee; to offer me pardon while yet I had not the humility to ask for it?

Behold, O my soul, thy unworthiness and thy necessity; behold moreover the condescension and benignity of Jesus, and acknowledging what thou owest to His love, pay at least a portion of thy debt by thanking Him. See how Jesus, in His Passion, turns His eyes toward thee because He has compassion on thee; and do thou, on thy part, turn thy eyes toward Him and compassionate Him in His sufferings.

I shall pray Our Lord to give me such a look of His mercy as may effectually move me to bewail my sins, and I shall excite within myself a prompt correspondence.

III. We must not omit a reflection respecting the man-

ner adopted by Our Saviour to convert St. Peter. He casts upon him a look not severe, nor stern, but agreeable and mild. And no more is required to move the sinner to open the eyes of his soul, to rise up and repent. This look is as a voice which penetrates his heart, to reclaim him from the enormous sacrilege that he has committed. However, it is not a voice which scornfully upbraids him, or which reproaches and jeers him on account of his vain boast of rather yielding up his life than his fidelity to his Master. It is rather a voice of sweetness and love, not to rebuke, but to admonish him; not to confound, but to convert him; a voice that kindly instructs and encourages him to rely upon the divine goodness, and to return to that first fervor from which he had fallen.

What sayest thou, O my soul! of this gentle manner observed by Our Saviour in the conversion of His beloved Apostle? On former occasions, when correcting Peter for lighter faults, He had used some asperity; but now that he is fallen into a most grievous sin, which might be sufficient to throw him into despair, He comforts him with sweetness, and whilst He makes him sensible of the grievousness of his sin He, at the same time, instils into him a consoling hope that he will be pardoned, and He moves him to shed tears of most tender compunction. Thus does God act. That God who with a glance makes the earth tremble strikes terror also into sinners; but a terror that leads to penance and salvation, and does not merely cause a cowardly sense of shame.

How frequently have I experienced the effects of this mercy within myself! The multitude and enormity of my sins at any time would have been to me an occasion of yielding to despair. But, O good Jesus! in what an amiable manner hast Thou proceeded with me! Thou hast enlightened me to know not only my horrible deformity, but likewise Thy infinite goodness. Thou hast inspired me and still continuest to inspire me with confidence, and Thou invitest me to follow Thee by holding out to me the hope of obtaining Thy grace and Thy glory.

Oh, how adorable is Thy mercy! Oh, how amiable! Grant, O my Jesus! that my confidence in it may increase ever more and more, that I may have a firm assurance that it will never abandon nor refuse me those helps that are requisite to work out my salvation. It is thus, O my God! I believe, that we must place our trust in Thee, and I am assured that Thy succors will never be wanting to those who trust in Thee.

From the example of Christ, who corrects St. Peter in so gentle a manner, I also shall learn to speak on all occasions with sweetness and charity whenever I find myself obliged to administer correction to my neighbor.

IV. Peter enters not into himself until Our Saviour illumines him with a gracious beam of heavenly light which radiates from His eyes, but no sooner is he illumined with this true light than he issues from the darkness of his sin. Had Peter departed after his denial, and thereby removed himself to a distance from his divine Master, whither would he have gone if not from bad to worse? Well was it for him that before his denial he had continued to follow Him, notwithstanding his fear of encountering troubles on this account; and that after his denial he would not abandon Him, but still remained outside the hall of Caiphas, since he could not enter within. All this indicated a tender love for his Lord.

And oh, what solicitude has not Jesus Christ, also, on this account for Peter! Whilst He permits him to fall for his humiliation, in that fall He abandons him not, but quickly goes with the aids of His grace to raise him again. This is the conduct that God invariably observes toward those that love and faithfully follow Him. He safeguards them with a special providence, and if they chance through frailty to yield to the temptations of Satan, He extends His hand to them in order to enable them to rise immediately.

Wherefore, on this account also, O my God! it is greatly to our advantage to love Thee. For if he that loves Thee happens through human weakness to stumble and fall

into any delinquency, he fails not to be afflicted by Thee, and he is reprov'd with gentleness and received with mercy, like a beloved son by a loving father; whilst Thou permittest professed and habitual sinners to hasten headlong from one abyss to another.

Therefore, for this reason also shall I love Thee, O my God! because, **through** respect for this love, Thou protectest the sinner and dost not suffer him to continue in sin, but inspirest him with sentiments of repentance, pardonest him, and with a superabundant charity worthy of Thee communicatest to him a copious supply of Thy grace.

I grieve for not having loved Thee, and for having been so insensible as not to be moved either by Thy infinite goodness or by a sense of my own advantage. Oh, grant me to love Thee, at least for this motive—that to love Thee is expedient for me; so that I may, from loving Thee through love for myself, continue to love Thee solely for Thy own sake, who art infinitely worthy and deserving of all my love.

I shall not flatter myself that, if I fall into sin, Jesus Christ will show me the same love He showed St. Peter. I ought to love God, but at the same time I must fear Him, and fear shall render me cautious and resolute.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### REPENTANCE OF ST. PETER AFTER HIS SIN.

I. THE first effect produced in Peter by that all-merciful glance of Jesus Christ was to be reminded of what He had told him—that he should deny Him thrice. When Peter heard this denial predicted, he looked on it as so great and so grievous a sin that it appeared to him impossible that his will should consent to such wickedness. And, indeed, we must be assured that, had he kept up the horrible idea of what mortal sin is, he would not have committed it. But instead of this he thought of nothing, and hence he sinned.

Afterward he began to think, and hence he conceived horror and contrition and gave vent to most bitter grief. Therefore, the first grace that he received to effect his conversion was the light of knowledge, the second was the fervor of contrition.

Peter knows the enormity of the evil he has committed, and consequently he humbles himself. He knows also the greatness of his Saviour's mercy toward him so earnestly alluring him to repentance, and hence the love of God is again enkindled in his heart, and from his heart tears of repentance flow again to his eyes. Were we to ask Peter of what he is thinking as he weeps he would answer, with David, that he is thinking of the exceeding evil he has done in offending God, the Supreme Good.

In the first place, it is most necessary for every sinner that he should know his evil state, and this is what I ask of Thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ! through the merits of Thy Passion. I ask one ray of Thy light, by which I may know the grievous error I have committed in offending Thy Sovereign Majesty. I know myself, and I acknowledge and accuse myself of being what I assuredly am—a most miserable sinner; and I know that this confession of my misery is, of itself, sufficient to move Thy divine mercy to pardon me. But I wish to satisfy Thee to the best of my power by a true love and a true sorrow. And how can my heart give Thee this satisfaction if my mind be not first penetrated by Thy divine light?

O eternal Word! who didst say in the beginning of the world, *Be light made!* and immediately light was, speak again and let the same effect be produced in my soul, in order that I may know Thy goodness—to love it, and my own wickedness—to detest it. O good Jesus! one glance alone from Thine eyes is enough to transform me from a proud and hardened sinner into a humble and contrite penitent. I am unworthy to be regarded by Thee, but my unworthiness will give so much the greater lustre to Thy goodness. My misery will cause Thy infinite mercy to appear in bolder relief.



Whenever I desire to excite in myself an act of contrition, I shall dispose myself thereto by a previous act of humility, making an avowal of my blindness, my weakness, and my unworthiness. For to be contrite it is indispensable, in the first place, to be humble.

II. No sooner has Jesus Christ cast a look upon Peter than he enters into himself and is filled with compunction, and that he may not lose the spirit of compunction the first thing he does is to quit Caiphas's house, as a dangerous place, where he is more likely to sin again than to repent sincerely of the sin already committed. In that house it had been an occasion of sin for him to remain in the company of those wretches, who, full of hatred against Jesus Christ, would, of course, give vent to their envy and spite by speaking ill of Him. He had met with an occasion also in the woman who misled him, as Eve had misled Adam. Therefore, he acts more prudently in leaving the house, for by that light which he has received he has learned to know his frailty and his dangers, and he considers himself bound to fly from them.

He relies no longer upon himself, nor upon his fervor. He says not: *If any one asks me again, I shall without hesitation own the truth, and confess Jesus Christ*; but he reflects that, at each of the three several times that he denied his Lord, he might easily have withstood the occasion and yet did not. Consequently, should the same thing happen again he might speak and act rightly, and yet perchance he will not because there is no dependence to be placed on him. Whence he prudently conceives a wholesome fear and provides for his safety by flight, thus giving a lesson to all that it is vain to make resolutions against sin, to bewail and avoid it, if we do not also avoid the occasion. But how do I profit by this example? This argument ought always to be impressed upon my soul: *If a St. Peter fell by an occasion of sin, much more probably shall I also fall by an occasion to which I am exposed, who am but a poor despicable wretch*. And yet, O my God! how great is my rashness! I know from experience how great is my

weakness and inconstancy in the occasions of sin, and yet I hesitate not to expose myself to them, and even, of my own accord, to seek them.

O Jesus, my Saviour! who didst with that look of compassion inspire St. Peter to fly the occasion, inspire me with the same resolution by a look of Thine eye of mercy, and let that inspiration be forceful and efficacious. I ask this especially with regard to persons of the other sex, of whom the devil makes use in order to effect the ruin even of saints; give me grace to keep, as far as possible, at a distance from them. Moreover, to keep at a distance from all those who live and converse as libertines and are possessed of a worldly spirit. For it is difficult to touch fire and not be burnt; to keep company with the perverse, and not be perverted.

III. Oh, how merciful is the providence of God, that He should at times permit His saints to fall that their falls may be so many profitable lessons to us! Peter's denial is hurtful to no one, whilst the example of his repentance is useful to all. Hast thou seen, O my soul, the sin of Peter? Behold also his tears. For this reason the Evangelists have shown him to us under the aspect of a sinner, and under that of a penitent, so that if we have imitated him in sinning we may imitate him also in detesting and deploring sin.

The virtue of which we have most need after offending God is that of hope in His mercy; for, if we have no hope of pardon, we shall not use the means to obtain it, and if we do not use the means we shall fall into impenitence, despair, and damnation. Hope, therefore, is most necessary, and we ought to excite ourselves to this virtue by reflecting upon the example of St. Peter. When, a short time before, Our Saviour had charged this Apostle to confirm his brethren after he himself was converted, he meant particularly that he was to confirm them in hope, showing to all by his own example that as he received pardon, so also will any one else, provided he be converted and repent. How enormous soever, then, our sins may be, it matters not. Our Saviour

has shown, in the example of Peter, that pardon is not refused to the penitent.

Hast thou understood, O my soul? Thinking at times upon thy sins, thou allowest thyself to be overcome by feelings of dejection as if all were over with thee. But thou art deceived. Hope and confide with all thy heart in God, for knowest thou not that however great thy wickedness it can never be compared to the divine goodness? Yes, O my God! I know it, I believe it; and still I feel faint-hearted. Oh, what remedy is there for me?

To Thee, O good Jesus! do I turn and I beg one kind glance from Thee,—for that alone can make me of good heart. If Thou lookest on me, I also, aided by Thy light, shall open my eyes to look on Thee; and, looking on Thee, how can I fail also to trust in Thee? O loving Saviour, to Thee be praise, and glory; to Thee eternal thanks! Truly, at the consideration of so many sins of every description that I have committed, and still continually commit, I should be liable to yield to despair, but oh, may I never do this! In Thee do I hope and find peace, for through the merits of Thy Passion Thou criest mercy for me to Thy Eternal Father.

I am bound to have hope, but, at the same time, I am bound to guard against excess in my hope, as would be the case if I hoped for the pardon of my sins from the divine mercy without doing penance for them, or endeavoring to amend my life.

IV. In the repentance of St. Peter one circumstance is worthy of note: it was prompt, without procrastination, or delay. For when he was called by the voice of Our Saviour to the Apostleship, he immediately left all and obeyed; so, likewise, the very moment that Jesus Christ now calls him by a glance of His eye to conversion he directly corresponds. Just as he was completing his sin the third time the Saviour calls him, and between the call to penance and the actual repentance no space of time intervenes.

This is as it should be. Because such is the will of God, that after sin we should return to Him again with all haste

and without delay, and because it is not allowed to continue an instant in mortal sin, there being always the obligation of immediately leaving that state; and, finally, because the longer one continues in mortal sin the more the evil increases and the greater becomes the difficulty of being extricated from it. It is an immense mercy on the part of God that He should vouchsafe to call the sinner by His grace. On the other hand, it is an injurious contempt of the divine Goodness to fail in corresponding with this mercy, rejecting with perverseness His loving invitations. The saying, *I shall repent by and by, I shall amend hereafter*, is likewise extremely dangerous to the soul, forasmuch as a time may come when it will desire the light and God will leave it enveloped in darkness.

The promptitude of St. Peter is deserving of imitation, whilst the obstinate blindness of my past life is a thing no less to be deplored. My God! I bewail all that time during which I deliberately lived in mortal sin, in rebellion, and in a total neglect of Thy inspirations. And how shall I be able—I will not say for hours, but for days and for weeks,—to endure Thy anger, which hung over me so terribly and threatened me with destruction? I thank Thy clemency, which has not given place to Thy vengeance as I deserved.

But how great, even now, is my obstinacy, to continue in those evil habits of pride, impatience, sloth, and so many other vices, notwithstanding that Thou, O my God, callest me and solicitest me over and over again to amend! I acknowledge that I merit the reproof which Thy wisdom gives to the reprobate: *I have spoken to them, and they have not heard. I have called to them, and they have not answered.*<sup>1</sup> Now I will abandon them. O Jesus! cast upon me one of those penetrating looks that Thou art accustomed to give to the elect, a look that shall be accompanied with such grace as Thou knowest (though I might resist it) I shall not actually resist, but shall coöperate with by doing in all things Thy holy will.

(<sup>1</sup>) Jeremias xxxv, 17.

I must not expect that grace will effect the entire work of conversion in me. It behooves me also to coöperate, by applying the faculties of my soul and doing violence to my depraved inclinations.

V. The repentance of St. Peter was, moreover, a sincere repentance, such as God will have in order to be acceptable to Him. It is not known what words this penitent made use of in his repentance; but we are assured that he shed abundant tears, and those speak most powerfully to the ears of God. He spoke with his eyes and by his tears he supplicated God's forgiveness, and he obtained it much more promptly than if he had employed his tongue in long prayers. Happy tears, which had the virtue of Baptism, to purify his soul from sin, because pressed out from the heart by sorrow springing from most tender love.

Peter weeps not, nor does he grieve, through any fear of being deposed from the dignity of head of the Church and arbiter of the keys of heaven. Nor does he weep or grieve because he sees himself exposed to that threat of the Saviour, that He shall be severe in the Day of Judgment to whomsoever shall have denied Him. The motive of his sorrow is not the penalty he has incurred, but solely the fault he has committed. Having offended his divine Master causes him more heartfelt pain than any other torment could have done. His sorrow is the sorrow of perfect contrition; this we must labor to obtain in order to be penitents indeed.

But behold a subject of immense fear for me. I am certain that I have often committed sin, but I am not certain that I am now a penitent, for what sorrow have I for my sins? They cause me so little anxiety when I reflect upon the dangers to which I am exposed, when I think of death, of judgment, of hell. But, in conscience, I can not say that I sincerely grieve for them because they are so many offences against Thee, O my God! My sorrow is not sincere, because my love is not. And what will any sort of repentance avail if the penitent be destitute of Thy love? Oh, if I loved Thee above all things and with my whole



heart, as I am bound to do, what pain would it not cause me to behold myself separated from Thee by sin !

Vouchsafe, O my divine Saviour ! to cast a loving glance upon me, and stir up Thy love within me that I may learn to bewail my sins with due sorrow. I now declare that I repent purely because I have offended Thee, the Supreme Good, who art most worthy of all love. Have pity on my sinful soul, and by the help of those graces that Thou hast merited for me by Thy Passion make me become a penitent with that degree of love and sorrow that will please Thee.

I shall accustom myself to bewail my sins with acts rather of contrition than attrition, inasmuch as contrition is more honorable to God, and more secure for myself.

VI. St. Peter, as soon as he had quitted the house of Caiphas, began bitterly to bewail his sin ; and, retiring like another David, full of shame and confusion through remorse of conscience, he ceased not continually to weep until, when he was informed of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, it behooved him to moderate his grief through joy for the mystery then accomplished. The Gospel mentions only his weeping, but with this we must also understand all that accompanies vehement sorrow : namely, beating of the breast, prostrations, sighs, sobs, and vexation of heart. And in this penitential spirit he persevered during the whole course of his life with a contrite and humble heart, ever mindful that he had sinned.

And here is another circumstance worthy of imitation, and that not simply as a counsel of perfection but of absolute necessity :—that our penance should be perpetual, should last throughout our lifetime, without our ever regarding ourselves as secure. But in order to arrive at this state it is not requisite that we should clothe ourselves with haircloth, but we must, from time to time, recall the memory of our sins, to conceive a detestation of them and to maintain ourselves in humility. We must make our penance for the evil we have done habitual, and we must adopt precautions against both present and future dangers ; con-

stantly supplicating the divine assistance, acknowledging that all proceeds from God, without ever presuming upon any virtue of our own. Can we complain if God changes the penalty of eternal fire, which is due to us for our sins, into a temporal penalty terminating with this miserable life?

Ah, my God! it is an effect of Thy mercy that Thou art content with so trivial a satisfaction in compensation for my grievous sins, for which, if I were punished according to my deserts, all the pains of hell would be too little. How is it, then, that at the name alone of penance my soul allows itself to be troubled, begins to murmur and to be uneasy? I know not, and, what is worse, I do not and will not apply my mind to think what it really is to have offended Thee, my good and great God! O my Lord Jesus Christ! by that most ardent charity wherewith Thou didst look on St. Peter, look on me also, and continue to shed upon me Thy heavenly lights that I may conceive aright the necessity I have of doing penance, in order that I may not grow weary nor cease to exercise myself in contrition, mortification, prayer, and humility. O Eternal Word of the Eternal Father! the grace of penance has been merited for me by Thee. Through Thy merits do I hope to obtain it and with Thy assistance I shall do penance.

As I have offended God in three ways—with my heart, with my tongue, and by my actions,—so ought I, also, in these three ways to do penance. I shall especially use my utmost endeavors to perform that penance well which is Sacramental.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### JESUS CHRIST LED TO PILATE THE GOVERNOR.

I. THE sentence having been pronounced that Jesus Christ is worthy of death, the council resolves to give Him over to the secular power and deliver Him to Pilate, a Gentile appointed by the Romans governor of Judea.

Nothing of all this happened by chance. All takes place as the Saviour Himself had already arranged and foretold, in a manner to show in the brightest light His most excellent charity. He suffers in order to save not only the Jews, who had been reared in the worship of the true God, but the Gentiles also, who worshipped idols. Hence, He is pleased that both the one and the other should bear a part in causing His Passion, so that all may share in the fruit of it. O goodness of the Author of life, who by a sublime providence thus orders that His sufferings should be of every description, and that of every description should be the authors of His death!

Moreover, here we should reflect how the malignity of the Jews is subservient to the counsels of divine wisdom. They lead Jesus Christ around through all the tribunals of the synagogue and of the world, to mark Him with the greater infamy by making known to all that guilt which has been imputed to Him. From this it comes to pass that His innocence is better known, as there is no accusation proved true against Him. The more numerous the judges who condemn Him the more glorious He becomes, since He is convicted by none, and He it is who is in all things victorious; as He conquers the world by truth, the devil by humility, and the implacable rage of His enemies by His meekness and patience.

Oh, what lessons, how marvelous and true, hast Thou taught us, O my good Jesus, in every circumstance of Thy sacred Passion! Thus it happens in practice, that under persecutions the victory is gained not by yielding to passions but by exercising virtues. What should it concern me that an evil judgment is passed on me by any one whoever it may be if my conscience is right with God, who is my only Judge? It is true that my natural feelings are pained by the false and rash judgments that are passed on me; but it is also true, as experience proves in an infinitude of cases, that this pain is not diminished but rather increased by yielding to pride, to anger, and to hatred.

Dost thou desire, O my soul, amid the assaults of the

devil and of the world, thine own interior peace that thou mayest better serve God from the heart? Listen to what Jesus teaches by His word and example: *Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.*<sup>1</sup> Grant, O my Saviour! by Thy mercy, that this Thy lesson may be faithfully learned by me. O how precious a lesson it is not only for obtaining life eternal but also for enjoying a happy life in this vale of tears!

I shall resolve to practise humility for this end also that I may conquer my greatest enemy, which is myself. It is self-love that disquiets me. I shall never be at ease if I do not learn to be humble.

II. The chief priests take Jesus Christ to Pilate, not only that He may be put to death—they not having criminal jurisdiction to shed blood,—but principally that He may be brought to an infamous death. It seems to them a small thing that He should die as a transgressor of the law of Moses. They are resolved that He shall die as a rebel against the State, a disturber of the public peace, deserving universal hatred from all. They might gratify their envy by killing Him secretly; but they are maliciously determined that He shall be executed by law as a criminal, and that in public, as a public malefactor, so as thoroughly to asperse the good name He had acquired.

Behold the extremity to which men are led by a malignant passion! These rulers of the Jews had seen the wonderful works of Jesus Christ and heard His marvelous discourses;—but in vain. Hence, all things that ought to have contributed to their good work together against them to evil even to the point that the Saviour of the world becomes more hateful to them. Learn, O my soul, and fear lest the divine graces which thou resistest be not converted into a punishment against thee, since Our Saviour is sent for the ruin of those who do not profit by His mercies for their salvation.

But how great must we suppose the bitterness and affliction of Jesus Christ to be on observing, as He does, all this

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xi, 29.



thoughtless eagerness and these malignant intentions of His enemies? He yields His feelings to endure all the terror that is naturally wont to be awakened under circumstances like these. But He preserves His soul in tranquil calm, without the slightest agitation, and without the least discomposure of the modesty of His bearing He behaves as a meek little lamb.

O most holy Jesus! all these examples that Thou givest me are most precious graces for me. One only of these graces, drawn from one only of these examples, should be more than enough to make me a saint. Nevertheless how far am I from sanctity! How blind amid so many lights! How deaf surrounded by so many calls! How weak amid so many helps! I tremble, O my Saviour! since this is a most evil sign for me—a sign of that malediction with which Thou strikest the reprobate. Never permit, I beseech Thee, that Thou shouldst one day have to reproach me also that Thou hast labored in vain for me. For mercy's sake, give me one of those powerful signal graces which Thou seest will make me careful to sanctify myself by the imitation of Thy virtues. One of these graces which Thou seest will make me put into execution the holy resolutions with which Thou deignest to inspire me.

I shall devote myself to the acquiring of interior virtues,—humility of heart, charity, resignation to the will of God. Then, also, I shall obtain the other exterior virtues of modesty, and meekness, and patience will become easy to me.

III. Jesus Christ had been bound by the officers in the garden, and, thus bound, had been led to Annas and Caiphas. Now all the rulers of the Jews lend a hand to bind Him anew with other ropes, in order that Pilate, according to the established custom, should understand from seeing Him loaded with so many chains and cords that He was capitally guilty and undeserving of mercy. See, my soul, thy Saviour, how He is fast bound with fetters on His hands, His arms, His breast, His neck, and led thus along the streets by the Jews as if He were one of the worst of



malefactors. It was by night that He was taken from the garden to the house of Annas. Now it is day when He is led to Pilate. Oh, what a crowd is there collected to look at Him! Scarcely any one feels pity for Him, as He has already been defamed throughout the entire city as a turbulent, seditious, superstitious man.

Observe, O my soul, this Man-God with His hands black from being tied behind His back, with His face bruised and filthy with spittle, His head bare and swollen with blows. Though weak and wearied with the continued insults and torments which He had suffered during the past night, see how He is still further ill-treated by these merciless wretches at every step by strokes with staves, and ropes, and by other most shameful outrages. And yet there can be seen in Him not the slightest sign of displeasure, sadness, or anger. What modesty, what gravity, what patience shine forth in His looks! He who does not understand the case may fancy that Jesus is dragged by force to the tribunal of the governor, but the truth is that He goes of His own free will to give Himself into the hands of Pilate, as He had, in the same way, given Himself into the hands of Caiphas. What charity! What mercy! What condescension!—and all for me.

I compassionate Thee in Thy suffering Humanity, and I thank Thee, I praise Thee, I glorify Thee, O Lover of my soul! for all these fetters with which Thou sufferest Thyself to be bound in order to loose me from my fetters, which are my sins. But ah, my Jesus! it suffices not that my bands should be broken by Thee. I would wish faithfully to follow Thee. And how can I come to Thee except by means of Thee, who art my end and my way. No one can follow Thee, nor be united with Thee, if he does not imitate Thee in Thy patience and Thy humility. Give me, then, O my Jesus! those graces which Thou hast merited for me to strengthen me to imitate Thy example. This is a mercy which Thou hast pledged Thyself to show me when Thou didst give the Jews liberty to treat Thee with every sort of cruelty.

In the patience and humility of Jesus there is a general rule for the solution of many cases of conscience at once. I shall apply the rule for my own direction and for that of others. Thus hath Jesus done. Therefore . . .

IV. Never before or since has any one been escorted through the city of Jerusalem with so much honor and so much ignominy as the Son of God is now conducted from the house of the high-priest Caiphas to that of the governor Pilate. With Him are all the princes of the synagogue, all the priests and Scribes and Pharisees and doctors, who form a great multitude. What an honor to be escorted by so many distinguished personages! But, at the same time, what ignominy, when we remark the manner in which the Son of God is accompanied, nothing being done during that half hour's journey but insulting Him with shameful reproaches! *Come along, you robber; go on, you sorcerer; now we shall see what your wisdom will avail you.* These and similar expressions are the encomiums He receives, and this innocent One, with His eyes cast down, humbles Himself as if He were actually guilty.

And again, what ignominy to know for what reason all these rulers have been moved to accompany Him! They go all together because they do not trust one another. They fear that there may, perchance, be in their number some good man who might defend Jesus, and they do not choose that any one should say a word in His defence. They go all together to give more credit to their unjust accusations and to force Pilate by their noisy vociferations to the absolute necessity of condemning Him. Oh, what exceeding malignity of hatred,—the most violent that can be conceived!

But enter, my soul, into the Heart of Jesus in order to contemplate His anguish, and if thou hast one spark of love for Him have also some sentiment of pity to compassionate Him. And what is the meaning of thy being so cruel, so hard, that all the dishonor and sorrow of the most-afflicted Saviour do not move thee in the least? Whoever loves,

must needs pity. It is for this reason that thou hast no compassion, because thou hast no love.

Oh, that it were not so, as indeed it is, O my Jesus! Thy love is wanting to me, and this being what more than all displeases Thee, I throw myself at Thy feet and protest that this same want of love is greatly displeasing to me. Ah! that Thou shouldst suffer so much for me, shouldst demand nothing from me except that I should love Thee,—and I do not love Thee. I do not love Thee, who in Thy Passion hast loved me so much! I grieve for my obduracy; but still more for my wickedness, which keeps my heart hardened. Ah! if I do not love Thee, accept at least and increase the desire I have to love Thee. I hope one day to obtain Thy love. I hope in Thee, not in myself, as I am poor and wretched and greatly wanting in Thy pure love.

I shall make acts of love and of compassion, and if I know not either how to love or to pity I shall grieve over my coldness, and shall detest my sloth and invoke the divine mercy.

V. In the Passion of Jesus Christ we ought to consider, on the one hand, His virtues that we may imitate them; and on the other, the vices of His enemies that we may detest them. There is no vice which the Saviour during the three years of His preaching so often reprov'd in the Pharisees as that of hypocrisy. And there is no vice which they are now more determined to put in practice. They are resolved that Jesus Christ shall be put to death, but in such a way that this enormous crime may not be imputed to them and that they may appear innocent. For this end they take Him to Pilate, in order that it may be said afterward that it was he who condemned Him. They pretend to desire nothing from Pilate but justice, and yet they have recourse to every expedient to make him pronounce a sentence the most unjust.

Arrived at the governor's palace, they make a scruple of entering the hall in which the tribunal is and feel no remorse at seeking the death of an innocent man. They are afraid of being defiled, as they have to eat the Paschal

Lamb, which was a figure of Christ, and they make no scruple of treating cruelly that same Christ Himself! O hypocrisy!

On the other hand, my soul, take a view of thy Saviour. Oh, how well does His exterior deportment correspond with His interior sanctity. He is the very truth, which can not lie, nor pretend, nor feign. True by excellence, true equally are all His virtues; as well those that He possesses in His soul as those that He exhibits in His looks. This is one of the principal dogmas held by every professor of His faith.

But, in this particular, how stands my heart? Thou, O my God! beholdest it. I myself can not in truth say that I have one single virtue. Like the Scribes and Pharisees, I make a scruple of some trifles of little or no importance; while in what above all offends fraternal charity my conscience is callous. I act the modest, chaste, patient, humble man; but if the world could see how perverse are my intentions, how I am ruled by vanity, self-love, human respect, and how corrupt is my heart, who would not consider me a veritable hypocrite, who pretends to virtue of which he has nothing but the appearance?

I am grieved, O my God! and crave Thy pardon for my hypocrisy. Ah! take from me this vice which was peculiar to those Jews who were Thy sworn enemies, and grant me a spirit like Thine own which may always in all things love the truth; a spirit sincere, ingenuous, upright, worthy of the eyes of Thy divine Majesty. O Lover of the truth! make me detest vanity and lies, through which I seek to please the world more than Thee, and aim at that which is temporal rather than that which is eternal.

I shall fly from hypocrisy as from the worst of evils. I shall apply to it the proper remedy,—which is, while in the presence of man to remember the presence of God. God is present *with me*. *God beholds me*.

VI. That day which is our Good Friday was with the Jews the Passover,—a day of solemnity. It is precisely on that day, when the priests and the people ought to be preparing themselves with devotion to sacrifice the lamb for



the cleansing of their sins, that they all are occupied with laying plots for and hastening the death of Jesus Christ, so that they can think of nothing else. But all this happens by a sovereign disposition of the most high God. For this was truly the Passover decreed from eternity, in which figures and shadows were to cease and the sacrifice was to be consummated of the true Lamb for the Redemption of the world. O day of eternal woe for the Jews! O day of eternal light for us!

Meanwhile, O my soul, apply thy thoughts to reflect how the governor, Pilate, being come out into the porch of his palace, Jesus Christ is delivered over to him by the magistrates of the Jews for no other end than that He should be put to death upon the cross,—a death of all deaths the most ignominious. See how they present Him to Pilate as a convicted malefactor. But, again, observe more correctly that as He is the sole disposer of His own life, it is properly speaking He who voluntarily presents and offers Himself for thy love.

O goodness, O charity, O mercy of the Saviour! who is come from heaven to earth on purpose to be judged and condemned to death in order to deliver me from eternal death. I praise Thee, O my Jesus! and I shall not cease to praise and to thank Thee all the days of my life in the hope of also continuing my praise and thanksgiving throughout eternal ages. Ah! as Thou didst give to the Jews liberty to present Thee to Pilate, give likewise to me liberty to present Thee for myself to the Eternal Father.

O Eternal, Almighty Father! I offer Thee Thy most innocent Son, bound and in chains, in the very condition in which He was led to Pilate. Can I give Thee anything more worthy, more precious, or more dear? What is the grace that Thou wilt deny me if I ask it from Thee for the love of Jesus Christ? Even the princes of the world grant favors to criminals in prison and under judgment, for the love of their sons. Therefore I ask Thee, for the love of Jesus, the favor that my sins may be forgiven me; the grace always to hate sin and the occasions of sin; the **grace**



to serve Thee faithfully in the practice of virtues, and particularly in the observance of Thy holy Commandments.

Frequently I shall make this offering of Jesus Christ to the Eternal Father, since it is most efficacious, especially in time of prayer, for obtaining every grace of which I have need for my eternal salvation.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### IMPENITENCE AND DESPAIR OF JUDAS.

I. JUDAS having received the money that was promised to him, did not on this account abandon Jesus Christ, but hoping that He would yet exonerate him and that he should be able to enjoy his gain in peace, he chose to wait and see the result. The wretch, observing the ill-treatment inflicted on his innocent Master and the patience and meekness with which He supported all, began to reflect on his own villainy, still more when he saw Him led away to Pilate. Then he looked upon Him as already condemned, at which he fell into sadness and went away gnashing his teeth and gnawing his hands because of the bitter remorse of his guilty conscience.

Judas did not know the enormity of his sin until after he had committed it. Then he experienced an extraordinary sadness on account of it; the devil, moreover, concurring to give him a conception of the grievousness of his crime, and, by increasing his sorrow, driving him to destruction. Thus is the infernal enemy wont to act. In order that a man may sin freely and without fear, he at first represents the sin under a charming aspect, so as to flatter the passions; then, after the sin has been committed, he represents it in its foul deformity, to fill the soul with shame and melancholy, to make it lose courage and fall into despair.

What I am saying with regard to Judas I have often found verified in myself. At the moment that I have con-

sented to sin the sin seemed to me delightful, and thus allured by pleasure, I sinned. But now what remains of that delight? Nothing but disgust and confusion. I would wish to repair this evil by penance, but my conscience terrifies me. In my dejection I feel my courage fail me and see no refuge but to fly to Thee, O my God!

Oh, if Judas, after having realized his wickedness, had raised his eyes to Thee! I raise mine to Thee, O Lord! and with my eyes I elevate likewise my voice to implore of Thee a grace that is most necessary for me in my wretched state. Grant that from the multitude and heinousness of my sins I may gain, not dejection, but humility. Not dejection, which would lead me to despair; but humility, which will help me to gain contrition and amendment. By this token we know Thy elect,—that even sin works together for them to good. This means that, after having fallen, they rise again with more humility and circumspection. Give me, also, O my God! by Thy grace, this resolution that my sins may serve to make me humble and circumspect so that I may never more offend Thee.

If the sadness that I experience for my sins conducts me to God, it is a gift of God. If it withdraws me from God, it is a diabolical illusion. With this reflection, I shall carefully examine myself.

II. Terrified by his own conscience and by the remembrance of those dreadful woes denounced by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper against him that should betray Him, Judas, the sinner, feels bitter remorse for his crime. He presents himself to the chief priests and makes a public confession of his sin. He restores the thirty pieces of money that he had unjustly obtained. He makes restitution, also, of honor to his Master whom he had betrayed, declaring himself the betrayer of just and innocent blood. But his repentance is of no avail, because it is not what it ought to be. It is altogether natural, and seems to aggravate his guilt in place of cancelling it, because it springs from a heart destitute of faith and hope.

Judas accuses himself of his treason, but he accuses him-

self as if he had merely betrayed a good man, not the Son of God. Here we behold his want of faith. Judas recollects the miracles of Jesus Christ and the benefits that he had received from Him, by all this increasing the deformity of his sin; but he thinks not of the mercy of Jesus Christ, to trust in Him, and to ask His pardon. Behold his want of hope. He had, with wicked confidence, too deeply abused the mercy of God. Therefore, like another Cain, he is now overwhelmed with the heinousness of his crime in such a manner that it appears to him that there is no further mercy for him.

I also am frequently assailed by a similar temptation, and I must admit that I deserve it for having so long, year after year, persisted in the abuse of Thy mercy, O my God! But suffer not, I beseech Thee, that I should fall so low as to reckon my wickedness greater than Thy clemency, or to fear Thy wrath more than I hope in Thy goodness. Let my sins be most grievous, innumerable, past reckoning; more exalted, more immense, do I still believe Thy mercy to be, —it is infinite. Far be it from me ever to distrust it. Nay, I prostrate myself before Thee to implore it. While I live I shall remember my iniquities in order to cause myself confusion of face, but this very confusion shall make me trust yet more in Thee. Help me, O Lord! to correspond with the gift of faith; let me not lose my faith by being ungrateful for my faith.

When I approach the Sacrament of Confession I shall take care that my confession be not a confession like that of Judas, and my repentance similar to the repentance of Judas. What sort of sorrow do I experience for my offences against God?

III. When he considers his atrocious wickedness, Judas knows that he has become hateful to earth and to Heaven; hateful to God, to the angels, to men, to the very devils themselves. Amazed, and almost distracted, he knows not where to turn. He has recourse to the princes of the synagogue in his anguish and confusion. He testifies to them the poignancy of his grief that they may bestow some com-

fort upon him. But they contemptuously answer: *What is that to us? Look thou to it.*<sup>1</sup>

Judas knew that Jesus Christ was full of love for sinners, and desirous of showing mercy to all; that He had never rejected any one, and that he might with confidence turn to Him, as in previous occasions he had seen with what extreme kindness so many other sinners had been received by Him. Moreover, he had but lately beheld Peter, after denying and again denying his divine Master, give him an example by his tears of contrition in what manner forgiveness may be obtained for any sin, however great, and from this reflection he might have taken courage.

Judas also knew how much he was beloved by the blessed Virgin. He might humble himself to her, and she would be his Mediatrix and Advocate. But the wretched man paid no attention to all this. He lost confidence and despaired of obtaining pardon; and we are forced to say that his final ruin proceeded not so much from his villainy in betraying Jesus Christ as from the obduracy and cowardice that caused him to mistrust the mercy of God. Divine inspirations were not wanting to him; but he preferred to follow his own blind passion and the temptation of the devil.

O my God! I fear, I greatly fear, that the devils, especially at the hour of my death, shall assail me with this horrible temptation, representing to me the multitude of my heinous sins and making me doubt Thy mercy. Ah, Father of mercies! have pity on me and permit not that I ever reject hope, because with that I shall exalt Thy praises above all. Deliver my soul not only from the infernal enemy, but also from the horror and fear that I have of this same cruel enemy. Most holy Mary, Refuge of sinners, assist and defend me from the malignant foe, and pray for me that I may hope in the mercy of God throughout the course of my life as well as at the hour of my death.

I shall accustom myself in time of health to make frequent acts of hope, that I may be enabled to practise them

(1) St. Matt. xxvii, 4.

with more facility in my last illness and at the hour of my death.

IV. The devil, seeing that Judas has repented of his sin in the presence of the priests, and fearing lest perhaps he should repent in downright earnestness, immediately fills his imagination with darkness and terror, in order to give him the last shock and thrust him headlong into final impenitence. The miserable man might yet encourage himself to hope for pardon by simply remembering that Jesus Christ did not refuse him His most august Sacrament in the supper room, nor His kiss of peace in the garden. But he pays no attention to all this. Casting down, through spite, the thirty pieces of money in the temple, he goes out and with his own hands hangs himself, thus becoming the witness of his own iniquity and at the same time the judge, the executioner, as well as the unpardonable culprit.

The case is terrifying; in it we must adore the just judgment of God, and conclude that Judas died impenitent and in despair because God finally abandoned him. And what brought him to this point? An inordinate passion—namely, avarice and love of money. And how did this passion become predominant in him? Because he was slothful in conquering it. By his own act, he inflicted on himself interiorly a most fatal and incurable wound, and through his own fault became incapable of conversion. This not unfrequently happens to so many others, whom God justly abandons to that state of reprobation in which they have voluntarily placed themselves through their own fault.

The same may happen to me also when I least expect it, since I too have within me certain vicious passions by which, from time to time, I suffer myself to be overcome because I know not how to do violence to myself in order to conquer them. If God abandons me and suffers me to come to an evil end I shall never be able to complain of Him, as He has in my regard a disposition most loving. The evil emanates from myself, because I am habitually slothful and am continually becoming more deserving of this final punishment.



Now I am touching the sore point with respect to myself. But O great God Almighty ! a deep abyss of nothingness, I humble myself to Thee and beseech Thee not to abandon me. Thou dost speak to my heart to assure me that the fault will be mine and not Thine ; and this, in truth, is the case. But what am I to do without Thee ? Give me inspirations as Thou pleasest, and strengthen me to do all that it pleases Thee to inspire me. Let my wickedness be conquered in the end by Thy mercy.

I ought most to fear being abandoned by God when I perceive that I do not fear it. I shall foresee the danger, and fear. I shall fear and maintain myself in humility, and in my humility the hope of eternal salvation shall come to me in abundance.

V. We should reflect on the case of Judas. In the first place, that his happiness was placed in money ; hence, avarice is fostered by him. In order to procure money he steals ; he betrays his own divine Master and hastens to apprehend him through the intense longing he has to possess it. But the moment he receives it from the high-priest Annas, a little before midnight, where is his imagined happiness ? One may say his enjoyment lasts scarcely for a moment, because he is immediately assailed with a profound melancholy. Early in the morning he throws away that money on the ground. He kills himself with a rope about his neck. The money is thus lost, and at the same time his soul is lost by despair, with his body. Behold the fruits obtained from clinging to an evil passion.

Thus it ordinarily happens with regard to all pleasures of the flesh and of the world which are procured by committing sin. Vain and momentary is the delight of the passions and the senses, while sharp and lasting are those torments which conscience afterward brings ; frightful and eternal these pains which the divine justice has prepared for those who sin. Is it worth while, O my soul ! to allow oneself to be captivated by worldly delights which vanish in a moment ? What madness to fall in love with vanity in exchange for the love of God, who is sovereign Goodness !

And yet in this madness I have raved almost all my life. I have loved vanity, sensuality, worldly prosperity, and bodily comforts. I have loved evil-speaking, revenge, malice, iniquity. Where now is the satisfaction that I hoped to find in gratifying my vicious attachments? The appearance of the frail, fleeting pleasure is gone, and I realize that I have been cheated by an illusion.

Ah, take from my heart, O my God! all those loves, and suffer me no longer to attach myself either to the pleasures or the consolations of this world lest I should come, by little and little, to the condition of Judas, who, where he thought to find his paradise, found hell. O sovereign Truth, my sweet Saviour! since Thou dost refuse Thy consolations to him that loves the joys of the earth, give me a hatred of vanity and make everything appear bitter to me except Thee, so that I may find joy in Thee alone, who art true sweetness—eternal sweetness.

To enjoy transitory pleasures here, and eternal pleasures hereafter, is impossible. Of necessity, I must forego either the one or the other. Which is more expedient for me? I shall consult my faith.

VI. Let us contrast the fall of Judas with that of St. Peter. Both the one and the other were chosen by Jesus Christ to the Apostleship. But the one and the other did not come to the same end. Peter sins, but he repents and is a saint. Judas sins,—he despairs, and he is a reprobate. That he is a saint Peter has to thank the mercy of God, and to say with St. Paul: *By the grace of God, I am what I am.*<sup>1</sup> Judas can in no degree blame God for his being a reprobate; he must ascribe it to his wickedness alone. Meanwhile if, after the example of Peter, we would hope to be saved, we must, by the example of Judas, fear to be damned; thus regulating our lives between hope and fear.

Thus placed between hope and fear, we shall live in humility; and indeed it is a strong motive for humility for any one to be forced to exclaim: *I know not what my end may be. I know not whether I shall be saved or damned.*

(1) I Cor. xv, 10.

God alone knows who shall be saved and who shall be damned. I know nothing of what is written in His eternal decrees. It is, indeed, a powerful motive for humility that no one knows what is to be his doom for all eternity. We read of many that have been favored with gifts of miracles and ecstasies,—they appeared to be fixed stars of holiness and, nevertheless, have subsequently fallen and become fuel for the eternal fire. Of others, again, we read that after having been for years filled with vices and wallowed in the mire of iniquity, they have been lifted up by the merciful hand of God and exalted to the thrones of the princes in heaven. Ah, can it be that in a soul impressed with these thoughts there can be room for movements of pride and arrogance?

But I have not learned to avail myself of the judgments of Thy incomprehensible wisdom, O my God, to Thy glory! I turn them into occasions of disquietude and become disturbed with painful anxieties. I know that I do wrong, because where there is unquietness and perturbation there is not Thy spirit, which is a spirit of consolation and peace. But, I beseech Thee, enlighten and assist me in order that I may turn them to profit, to humble myself with a humility confiding in Thy infinite goodness; since I am assured that in this humility there is always glory to Thee.

From my frailty and weakness I shall no longer infer that I am not predestinated. Rather I shall hope to be so, because Paradise has been promised to me and merited for me by Thee, O Thou Saviour of my soul! Of myself, I have every reason to despair of my eternal salvation; in Thee, every reason to hope for it with confidence. In Thee, therefore, do I hope, and from the multitude of graces with which Thou hast thus far prevented me I take courage also to hope for that final grace which will bring me into Thy glory.

Judas was damned because he despaired, and he despaired because he did not reflect on the price of his Redemption. This I shall ponder well in meditations on the Passion of Jesus Christ, and my hopes will be strengthened.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### JESUS CHRIST ACCUSED BY THE JEWS BEFORE PILATE.

I. PILATE, knowing that the Jews, adhering to their ceremonies, would not enter his palace, goes forth upon a portico; and seeing, on the one hand, Jesus Christ bound with so many ropes and chains, which was a token of extraordinary guilt; but, on the other, not having any indictment presented to him to acquaint him with the nature of His crime, asks the priests and Scribes what accusation they bring against this man. The governor does not venture to decide upon his guilt either from the signs that he sees or from the clamor that he hears, and in order to proceed with uprightness and not to pass judgment with his eyes closed, he thinks proper to inquire into the facts according to the forms of justice.

There is a contrast between the Jews and Pilate. Pilate, a Gentile, who knows nothing concerning our Faith, seeks to examine with diligence the cause of Jesus Christ, because, according to the dictates of his natural reason alone, he knows that an innocent man ought not to be condemned. The Jews, on the contrary, born and educated under the religion and law of the true God, trampling on the divine commandment not to put a just and innocent man to death, insist that Jesus Christ, although most innocent, should be slain as if He were a robber. What more is wanting for the fulfilment of the prophecy: that among the people of the synagogue there should be a greater amount of malice, treachery, and impiety, than there is among infidels?

Moreover, is not the same anomaly to be observed in Christendom? How often is there not more rectitude in an illiterate person than in a theologian? More honesty in a secular than in a religious? More virtue in a man immersed in the business of the world than in one who makes profession of spirituality and perfection? I shall look at myself.

I must say of my own soul: How many are there who have less light and knowledge than I, and are of far better



character than I, and who have a conscience more upright, more scrupulous in the observance of Thy most holy law, O my God! than I have? How many are there who do not know how to read nor how to meditate, who understand but little of Thy sacred mysteries, and yet fear Thee, love Thee, and faithfully serve Thee better than I? How many, I repeat,—how many will there be among the very infidels who have more love than I for their neighbor, more reverence for their elders, more patience under affliction, more justice to guard them from doing wrong to any one, whoever it may be, in word or deed? I foresee as impending, O my God! a severe and tremendous judgment from Thee. Ah! suffer not, I implore Thee, that I should any longer stand in opposition, but rather that I may always be obedient, to Thy lights. My predominant passions make me resemble the Jews in their blindness and obduracy. I pray Thee to give me strength to mortify them, to repress and subdue them.

When an occasion occurs for committing some sin against Jesus Christ, I shall say to my passions what Pilate said to the Jews: *What accusation bring you against this man?*<sup>1</sup> Let us examine the life of Jesus, if He be worthy of hatred or of love. Does He deserve to be offended?

II. Pilate knows the malice of the Jews, that they are eager for the death of Jesus Christ; he knows, moreover, that they are committing an offence against himself and his authority by coming to him that he may act, not as a judge, but as an executor of their wicked purposes. Therefore he justly resists, and asks what accusation they bring forward. And what accusation do they make? None. Not knowing what to say and seeing themselves put to the blush, they arrogantly answer: *If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee.*<sup>2</sup>

Let us consider the pride of these words. Puffed with self-conceit, they expect that Jesus Christ should be judged a criminal worthy of death simply because they assert that He is so. They endeavor to cover their impiety under the

(1) St. John xviii, 29. (2) Ibid., 30.



mantle of authority, and to appear men of integrity and of pure consciences, while with cavils and lies they hold up as a malefactor the Benefactor of the whole world. They do not perceive that by not having proofs to convict Him as an offender they, on the contrary, prove His innocence and publish their own malignity.

If Pilate, in order to satisfy himself of the truth, had interrogated those possessed by devils whom Jesus had set free, the blind He had enlightened, the lepers cleansed, the dead raised to life, and the thousands and thousands of others miraculously healed, he would have had good grounds to decide whether this man was a malefactor. Meanwhile the blessed Jesus, hearing Himself accused by so many voices as a malefactor, how does He vindicate Himself? He says nothing, and by His exemplary silence He teaches us how we should practise patience amid the trials of this world.

O patience, it must needs be that thou art a virtue to be held in high esteem, since thou art so dear and so precious to the Incarnate Son of God that He loves rather to show Himself to be patient than He does to be deemed innocent! And what value do I put on this virtue? I would wish to see it in others, and I care not to possess it myself. I know how to give exhortations to any one else to have patience, and this same exhortation I know not how to make to myself on the slightest occasion. I reprove and blame impatience as something that is ill-becoming any one whoever it may be, and yet I am the most impatient of all and I know not how to correct myself with the same zeal with which I correct others.

O great God of patience! assist me by Thy grace to follow Thee in practice. Give me an affection, O my most patient Jesus! for enduring out of love for Thee that most distressing pain that I experience when I see myself put to shame by the evil tongues of others. In this consists that true blessedness which Thou didst preach in Thy Gospel,—but I do not understand that maxim. And yet, in order

to understand it, what more is wanting than to remember Thee and to consider attentively Thy example?

I shall again reflect whether there is in me that Jewish pride to expect that when I speak what I say should be at once believed. I shall detest this vice, and shall be persuaded that pride is the mother of impatience.

III. Pilate beholds the effrontery of the Jews, who in order to obtain the gratification of their passions insist on his becoming the agent of a cruel injustice; and, knowing how readily they are induced to stir up seditious tumults, he calmly answers them. Since you desire that this man should be condemned as a criminal, although there is no evidence of guilt about Him, I feel no disposition myself to take the cause in hand: *Take Him you, and judge Him according to your law*,<sup>1</sup> if your law is of such a nature that it also condemns the innocent. O case that truly calls for tears! According to the law of the infidels, Jesus Christ, being innocent, can not be condemned; while the Jews, who boast of being observers of the law of God, insist that at any cost He should be put to death.

They profess that they would scruple to use their own hands to kill Him as an unlawful thing, but they have no remorse in desiring and insisting that He should be killed. A sin of the heart with them is counted as nothing, and they form to themselves a blameless conscience provided only that they keep their hands from the act. Is it not to condemn Him to insist with such earnestness that He should be condemned? Where does the law teach that it is lawful to desire what it is not lawful to do?

But how far am I carried in my execration of the Jews? Am I not in the same condition myself, and that not unfrequently? O my God! Thou art the witness of my depravity. Before the world I manifest signs of aversion and hatred for a sinful act, but I am also ready to consent to sin with the malice of my heart. I can assume the air of a zealous and scrupulous person in guarding against a venial sin that may meet the public eye, but I have not the horror

(1) St. John xviii, 31.

that I ought to have for a secret mortal sin. Like the Jews I care more for my reputation than for my conscience, and I have no hesitation to indulge an evil motive of hatred, revenge or envy, when the sin can be cloaked under a mantle of justice or of zeal.

I am aware that this is a dreadful state for me to be in, since it is impossible that the love of God can be in my heart while I abstain from offending God only through human respect. I must apply to myself what was said to the Jews of purifying their interior, since without this the exterior is of no value. And when shall it be, O my beloved Saviour! that this my inward man is to be reformed and conformed to the pattern of Thy truth and holiness? Have mercy on me, I implore Thee, and furnish me with Thy helps,—I mean Thy powerful, efficacious helps, by which all hypocrisy may be eradicated from me and that I may begin to regulate myself perfectly, both interiorly and exteriorly.

The malice of every sin lies principally in the heart. I must zealously guard my heart, as God is offended and the soul lost not less by interior than by exterior wickedness.

IV. The Jews, in stating that it is not lawful to execute a capital sentence, simply declare that the desired Messiah is come for the salvation of the world. For, as the prophecy has declared that full judicial power shall continue to exist among the Jews until the Messiah shall have come, and as they now confess that this power has come to an end with them, whereas it was in vigor before, and has been taken from them but a short time ago by the Roman dominion, it is clear that they make the avowal that the Messiah is come, and that Jesus Christ is He, is proved by His miracles, His doctrines, and the predictions that have been verified in Him. Nevertheless, He is seized and treated like one of those false prophets, described by Moses, who would seduce the people with their superstitions. O blind and miserable men, unworthy of compassion, since they have recourse to the sign that points out the Saviour

in order that this same Saviour may be put to death on the cross.

The Evangelist here adds, with good reason, that it had already been foretold by Jesus Christ that His Passion should be begun by the Jews and followed up by the Gentiles. So that when it is seen that His prediction is accomplished, it may be known that in this Man presented before Pilate as a public malefactor there is the person of the Most High God; and that it may be likewise understood that it is not the malice of His enemies that evidently keeps Him thus degraded and humbled, but that it is Himself who wills it thus, with a virtue that appertains to Him alone and which is worthy to redeem the world.

Let the Jews then raise their voices against Thee, as loud as they please, O my Lord Jesus Christ! and multiply their calumnies. I also shall cry aloud in my spirit to the utmost of my knowledge and my strength, uniting my voice with that of the Seraphim and of Thy elect, and I shall say: *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power: because Thou hast created all things; and for Thy will they were and have been created.*<sup>1</sup> Ah, my God! who hast been humbled to teach me humility and to cure me of the vanities and follies that are so prized in the world, break this charm which keeps me so strongly bound to the esteem and love of vain honor. Grant that I may place no value in any honor except that which springs from virtue and which appertains to Thy glory, and make me learn that it is a great dishonor for me to be so proud in the school of a Master who is so humble.

At every stage of the Passion, on which I shall meditate, I shall remember to cry aloud to Jesus Christ, *Holy, holy, holy*; confessing Him true God, deserving of all glory in His sufferings and ignominies.

(<sup>1</sup>) Apoc. iv, 8, 11.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## JESUS CHRIST BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL OF PILATE.

I. PILATE, seeing that the Jews had no specific accusation to bring against Jesus Christ of any crime, and at the same time being more inclined to absolve than to punish the innocent, again enters the hall of audience and calls to him Jesus Christ, there to examine His cause with deliberation and seriously, removed from all tumult. He asks Him no questions in presence of the Jews, His avowed malignant persecutors; and, as he entertains a high opinion of Him, he wishes fully to satisfy himself and learn from the mouth of Jesus whether that general accusation that is brought against Him of being a malefactor is true or false.

Now let us contemplate Jesus Christ standing in the presence of Pilate, with His hands tied behind Him. Pilate sits on his tribunal in the character of judge, and let us well reflect to what a point the Creator of heaven and earth has humbled Himself,—He the true Son of God established by his Eternal Father Judge of the whole world.

He stands before a profane man, an adorer of idols, to be examined and judged as a criminal who has deserved death. But a few hours since, His apprehension in the garden took place, and He has been already presented to three judges—Annas, Caiphas, and Pilate; and now, the Jews not having been able to discover any one point on which really to accuse Him, how does His unspotted innocence beam forth on every side? How does His meek humility manifest itself? During the three years of His ministry He has always endeavored to practise humility, and now on the day of His Passion He gives a sermon on this same humility by His example, which is the most efficacious of all sermons.

But what fruit, O my Jesus! do I gather from this preaching of humility which has been so frequently repeated by Thee with Thy voice and by Thy example? Thou lovest and seekest occasions of being humbled; I hate and fly from them. Thou findest consolation in every humiliation of Thine, from the thought alone that Thou humblest



Thyself for me and for my love. How irksome and difficult it is for me to humble myself for Thy love! Ah, my Jesus! have mercy on me a poor and proud sinner; have mercy on me a miserable creature, who, in the midst of my miseries, am so resentful and impatient. Pay no regard to my pride, which makes me unworthy, most unworthy of Thy mercies, and in mercy grant me grace to imitate Thee in Thy holy humility. If I have not courage to love and seek humiliations, make me, at least, endure those that come in my way with meekness and patience, in remembrance of Thy example. I hope to be heard, because I ask for something that I know is pleasing to Thee and in which Thou delightest to hear me.

I shall reflect on what occasions I may have to submit to the opinion, the ideas and judgment of any one who is inferior to me, and I shall embrace them willingly, in imitation of Jesus Christ who submitted Himself to Pilate.

II. Pilate supposes, by some private information that he has received, that Jesus Christ has been brought to him as a rebel who has been endeavoring to make himself king. Therefore, as a representative of Caesar, considering himself bound to investigate this point, he asks Him if He is indeed the King of the Jews, in order that, if it be true, He may declare Himself. What does the blessed Jesus answer? He had remained silent when He was accused by the priests, but now He thinks it well to speak, to instruct him and to remove from his mind those political suspicions and jealousies. To raise Pilate's thoughts to higher things, He gives him to understand that His kingdom is not of this world—that is, that He is not an earthly King,—for this manifest reason, that He has neither armies for His defence, nor cities at His command.

Oh, how full of profound meaning is this answer of the Saviour! He would say His kingdom is not earthly, and so He has no wish to stand in the way of the dominion enjoyed by the kings of this world,—frail kingdoms, which require to be supported by force and by arms; but a heavenly kingdom, supreme, eternal, immense, immortal, which

has no dependence on any one, and possesses in itself an overflowing abundance of all goods. Jesus Christ has deeply at heart the desire to have this truth understood; and that, not so much by Pilate as by all, and more especially by us. How do I understand it?

I thank Thee, O my Lord and my God! for Thy light, by which I now know and confess and detest the errors of my life. Thy kingdom is not of this world. So stands the truth, and so I believe it. But, notwithstanding this, which faith teaches me, what illusions have possessed my spirit, and what attachments of the heart have I not had for the nothingness of this perishable world? A mere nothing, properly speaking, is all that which here below has the name of grandeur, riches, pleasures, happiness, position, advancement, fortune; and, in pursuit of this nothing, how many thoughts, how many affections have I prodigally squandered with contempt, moreover, of eternity, as if there was not another life?

Ah, my Jesus, my Master! for what end hast Thou said that Thy kingdom is not of this world, if not to teach me that in this world there is nothing that is worthy either of my esteem or of my love, and that Thy divine Majesty will never condescend to dwell in a soul that loves the world, to the prejudice of that love which is due to Thee? Thou, then, I beseech Thee, who givest me light to know the truth, give me also strength and courage to practise it. Take from me the love of this world, and make all my desires aspire to the kingdom of Thy grace in this world and to the kingdom of Thy glory in the other. Change the objects of my ambition, so that my immortal soul may be ambitious for none but immortal goods.

When in the *Pater noster* I shall say these words, *Adveniat regnum tuum*, I shall pray God to assist me to live now in His grace that afterward I may live eternally in His glory.

III. Before Jesus Christ speaks to Pilate of His kingdom, He gives him a token of His Divinity and shows him that hidden things are known to Him, by telling him in

terms most intelligible that the question proposed to Him, whether He is a King, is nothing but an insult suggested by the malice of the Jews and that he should reflect well what he is about. Therefore the governor, considering on the one hand the wisdom, on the other the innocence of Jesus Christ, at once humbles himself in a certain way, as though to plead his excuse, and answers: *What Thou sayest is all true. I do not accuse Thee, for I am not a Jew and I know nothing of what regards Thee. They who belong to your nation have brought Thee here, because they seek Thy death. But tell me: What hast Thou done? If Thou dost not accuse Thyself, I have nothing to lay to Thy charge.*<sup>1</sup>

These circumstances appear trifling; but St. John has written them down with good judgment, in order that it may be evident to all that the innocence of the Saviour was altogether spotless, and that the sentence of death pronounced against Him by the wicked Jews was most unjust. Let us mention the great something that might have been named to Pilate, who was desirous to know what Jesus Christ had done; with one word He had made heaven and earth, and whatever He pleased in heaven and earth. What has He not done for that people, who accuse Him with such perfidy, to deliver them from the slavery of Egypt with an infinitude of miracles? What has He not done for the salvation of all the world, and what is He not doing now by His sufferings to redeem it from the power of hell? Nevertheless, He passes for a malefactor; and being one solely on account of our sins, which He has pleased to take upon Himself, it is for them that He submits to be judged with so much ignominy.

Ah, my Jesus! Thou art a sinner only in appearance and in figure,—for the sins that have been committed by me, not by Thee. Therefore, while I behold Thee questioned by the judge, What hast Thou done? *Quid fecisti?* as if Thou wast a criminal, I reflect on myself with trembling; while I consider that a time shall come when the same question,

(1) St. John xviii.

*Quid fecisti?* which is proposed to Thee will be proposed to me. To my soul, on the instant that it has left my body, it will be said, *What hast thou done?* And what shall become of me at this time, when my conscience being obliged to answer, it will be impossible to conceal or to excuse my countless iniquities? O my God! there is no refuge for me except in Thy mercy, and I now most humbly implore it against that day. I now make in Thy presence the confession of all my sins, that I may not then suffer from confusion on their account.

To myself I shall represent death as near at hand, and judgment likewise. I shall promptly prepare for them with acts of contrition, as if I was actually about to die and had no time to lose.

IV. After Jesus Christ had repeated again and again that His kingdom is not of this world, giving an evident demonstration of the truth of what He says, in order to dissipate the apprehensions that usually arise from political considerations of affairs of state, Pilate is satisfied. Recognizing the fact that Jesus Christ, in His poor abject condition, is exceedingly far from the thought of aspiring to an earthly kingdom, for the conquest of which extraordinary preparations are requisite, he addressed to Him these words: *Art Thou the king of the Jews?*<sup>1</sup> not with the intention of convicting or of mocking Him, but to show his contempt for the calumnious Jews. As though he would say: How can it be that this man should be conspiring against Caesar, since He is so poor and miserable and forsaken by everybody?

Pilate being therefore persuaded that there is no danger of his being robbed of the kingdom of Judea, Jesus Christ answers that it is true that He is a King. He gives him to understand that He is not a temporal King, after the fashion of other kings; nevertheless, that He is a King and a real King, having supreme authority, as foretold by the Prophets. In order to make him understand, also, that

(1) St. John xviii, 33.



being superior to all kings, He would not be seen in so miserable a plight if He did not so choose.

O my soul! let us adore this King of heaven and earth; a pacific King, who is not come to bring war nor excite hostility against any one, and who is altogether different from other kings. The kings of the earth oppress their subjects and treat them as if they were slaves; but this King is a magnificent King and Monarch, who exalts those who serve Him and makes them all kings. In the world subjects give their life for the preservation of the king, but this King gives His blood and His life for the salvation of His subjects.

O divine King! whose kingdom is established in elect souls, and who, being supreme, art most deserving to be preferred to all creatures in the world, I humble myself before Thee, I adore Thee and confess Thee for what Thou art, King and Lord of all kings, my own true and lawful King. With sorrow I accuse myself of having refused and cast Thee from me with greater malice and treachery than the Jews. O guilty wretch that I am, for having rejected Thee and allowed sin to reign in me! I repent of this enormous crime. Ah, come, O my God! come reign in me and possess me wholly, body and soul, so that there may be nothing left in me but what may be employed in the service of Thy august Majesty.

I shall pray Jesus Christ to vouchsafe to reign in me by His grace, so that I may become worthy to reign with Him in His glory. He will reign in me if I am humble, mortified, and obedient to His will.

V. In His answer to Pilate, Jesus Christ had already said that He is King—but not like the kings of this world in their earthly kingdoms. He had again affirmed that He is King—meaning that He is so in a supreme sense, King by excellence. And in order that no one may imagine that He had usurped a kingdom by rapine and conquest, He proceeds to explain that He is King by right of birth, being born of a Father who is a King, and that He has the attribute of royalty belonging to His own proper essence. More-



over, adding that He had become Man for the purpose of making Himself known for what He really is, to convince all the world of the truth, since it was deceived by diabolical deceptions, and to reign in all those who wish to believe in Him as King.

By these words Jesus Christ makes known the object of His coming into the world, which is not to command nor to make Himself esteemed by force of arms, by riches and pomp, but to teach truth, which principally consists in three points of knowledge: that there is one only God, who is true God, one in essence, three in person; that Jesus is the true Son of God, made Man for our salvation; and that there is a kingdom of eternal bliss, which is gained by doing penance and violence to one's own passions. This is the truth, which has of necessity to be believed in order to obtain salvation. But who is there that can believe or live according to the doctrines of Jesus Christ, if he is not aided by the grace of Jesus Christ? O the counsels, O the mysteries of the Most High God!

So without the divine grace we can do nothing for eternal life. Yet I must not draw hence thoughts of despair. No; but of humility and confidence. Without grace we can do nothing. This is a truth. But it is likewise true that this grace has been merited for me by Jesus Christ. Why, therefore, should I not have confidence that He will give me grace, since He has given me His blood and His life itself?

O my God! who has promised grace to every one who will humble himself to ask for it, I humble myself before Thy greatness with the most profound respect, and I ask Thee for the grace to believe firmly all that which Thou wilt have me believe; the grace to hope confidently for all that for which Thou wilt have me hope; the grace to act rightly in conformity with all that I believe and hope. Ah, my Jesus! I am safe with Thee; suffer not my malice to be an obstacle to the effects of Thy most beneficent goodness.

In vain do I complain of not receiving certain auxiliary graces to make me tend in right earnest to perfection. It

is I myself who place obstacles to grace by my attachment to vanity. On these I shall examine myself in order to rid myself of them.

VI. It must needs be that the price and merit of truth are very great, since the Son of God declares that for this end He makes Himself Man: namely, to announce it and make it known to a blind and ignorant world. Wherefore even Pilate, captivated by those few words of Jesus Christ, is inflamed with a desire to be instructed in the truth that he may comprehend it, and he asks what it is, that he may learn its nature and prerogatives of which he is ignorant. But, oh, how difficult is it for a soul under the dominion of vanity to apply itself to the understanding of truth! Pilate has scarcely asked the question, What is truth? but immediately, without waiting for the answer, he leaves Jesus and goes to speak to the Jews. He is a man of the world. Hence it is that within and without there are too many difficulties for him to love the truth and obey the voice of Christ.

How many persons are there in the world, and even among ecclesiastics, who on this point are like Pilate! Influenced by certain lights of grace they would wish to learn eternal truths for the regulation of their lives, but they can not find time to bring about in themselves a solid conversion; because they are occupied in vanity they are drawn aside, first by one thing, then by another. How many conceive good desires of devoting themselves to the conquering of their vices, to the acquiring of virtues, to the salvation of their souls, and through pusillanimity they allow the inspiration to pass unheeded and they cling to the temptation. Oh, worthless beings, to turn, like Pilate, almost in a moment from light to darkness, from truth to error!

One of these, O my God! am I, and perhaps the worst of them all. Thy mercy often comes *with inspirations* to enlighten me and move me to detach myself from vanities, and to apply my mind to the consideration of truth and my heart to the love of truth, and I would really wish to follow Thy movements. But, oh, how readily does some inclina-

tion turn me aside, change me. The good that I appear to wish to do I leave undone, and in the good which I sometimes begin I do not persevere! The evil does not consist in this, that I do not know the truth. I know, O my Jesus, my Master! that Thy commandments are truth. I also know that to all Thy truths I should conform my life, and I would desire to do what I ought; meanwhile, that truth which I have in my mind I do not put into practice. And when shall it happen that stability will be given to my instability? O Lord my God! I abandon to Thee my will, and I pray Thee to animate and confirm it in the fervent resolution of obeying Thee in all things, and of never drawing back from Thy holy service.

Every good desire to serve God is precious, but it is of no avail if we do not strive effectually to carry it out. Therefore, I shall reflect what efficacy I give to my desires and resolutions.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### JESUS CHRIST ACCUSED AGAIN BY THE JEWS.

I. PILATE is aware of the innocence of Jesus Christ from the few words that He has spoken, and merely by the twilight of his human understanding, detesting the impiety and malignity of the Jews, he determines justly, in his own mind, that He does not deserve to be condemned. Therefore, desiring to liberate Him from this persecution, he comes forth from the hall, and leading Jesus Christ with him, he goes out on the balcony which overlooks the public square, that there he may plead for Him in presence of all. There he says with a loud voice: *I find no cause in this man.*<sup>1</sup> At the same time the Jews, with great noise, begin to make new accusations against Him, and not knowing what crime to impute to Him to make Him worthy of death, they magnify it into a crime for which there is no

(1) St. Luke xxiii, 4.

excuse,—that He is seeking to have Himself proclaimed king.

But on this point He has already been proved innocent in the examination that He has undergone, and Pilate would not say that he saw no cause to condemn Him if he had found Him guilty on this point. We must reflect that Jesus Christ might, of Himself, vindicate His character in the face of the Jews and prove them to be calumnious, with a most convincing proof, by bringing forward five thousand men who in the wilderness wished to make Him king, to bear witness that He had fled;—so far was it from the truth to say that He was ambitious. Nevertheless He is silent; and this is the marvel to be observed in His silence: that by the very fact of His being silent, Pilate becomes more fully persuaded both of His innocence and of the perverseness of the Jews.

O good Jesus! to whom the name of wonderful and mighty is given by the Eternal Father. Wonderful and mighty Thou hast, in truth, made Thyself known to be by Thy words; but not less wonderful, not less mighty art Thou in Thy silence, since it is by silence that Thou provest the truth, that Thou repellst falsehood and puttest Thy innocence in more glorious relief. I console myself with the thought that, although Thou art to be condemned, Thou art declared by Thy judge himself to be innocent. Ah! give me grace to imitate Thee in Thy virtuous silence.

I deceive myself when, on certain occasions, I imagine that I crush evil accusations and defend my character by becoming irritated. Thou dost instruct me to the contrary, O my Saviour! by Thy example, and I ought to learn that if the evil that is said of me is true I should humble myself and try to amend. If it is not true, I must remain tranquil and remember that there is no way better suited for proving innocence than modesty and patience. I know what I should do, O my God! but will I do it? I am altogether mistrustful of myself, and I have nothing to depend upon if not solely on the aid of Thy most holy grace.

My self-love would wish that those who speak evil of me



might appear to be murmurers and calumniators. This is a most hateful vice, and I must resolve on its amendment.

II. The accusations made against Jesus Christ in the presence of Pilate are threefold: that He has subverted the people by His doctrines; that He has forbidden them to give tribute to Caesar; and that He said that He is the Messiah, the promised King of the Jews. But, oh, how evident it is that all these accusations are false! When did He seek to subvert the people, and not rather convert them, by preaching humility and penance? When has any foundation been given for suspicion by His doctrine, and not rather for wonder and admiration? When did He ever sow divisions, and not rather preach peace and charity?

As to the tribute, when did He forbid it, and not rather command its payment by His voice and example? Pilate is so fully persuaded that these accusations are mere calumnies that he does not even proceed to an examination concerning them, and with regard to His ambition of becoming a king, this also is a lie which has already been acknowledged to be deserving of no credit. This alone is true,—that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and the Saviour of the world. But, oh, to what a point does Jewish impiety reach, even surpassing all excess, to set down as an enormous misdeed a benefit the greatest, the most striking of all that the wisdom and merciful omnipotence of God has ever conferred on the whole human race!

Meanwhile, O my soul! enter into the consideration of what Jesus Christ is doing in His interior during the time that He sees Himself unjustly persecuted by those princes, His sworn enemies. To His Eternal Father He offers the dishonor that accrues to Himself from all these falsehoods. It suffices to Him that His innocence is known to God, and therefore He profoundly humbles Himself and remains silent. Moreover, He accepts and loves this abjection as a just satisfaction which has to be made to the divine Majesty for our pride.

Oh, what obligations, my Jesus! have I to bless Thee, to praise Thee, and to thank Thee; but, more than all, to



imitate Thee! Nevertheless, how negligent have I been in my duties! How strangely removed from the imitation of Thy examples! Thou spontaneously seekest reproaches; and not only seekest, but lovest them. I not only hate and fly from all that might in any way dishonor me, but on the contrary, with determination, I seek every occasion of being praised and honored. I feel, as it were, out of my element if I find no one to praise and honor me, and I am an excessive lover of vain-glory. Oh, how great is Thy humility! How extreme is my pride! Let one ray, I beseech Thee, of Thy grace descend, O my God! to enlighten me with the knowledge that to Thee are due praises, to Thee belong honors; to me are due all the reproaches and dishonors of the world.

Thou deservest all good, because Thou art full of grace, of truth and holiness. I deserve all evil, because I am full of iniquity.

With regard to praises, I shall resolve never to seek them. If at times I meet with praise, I shall guard against complacency in it, referring all the glory to God. However, I shall do nothing without the assistance of this same God, which I must implore.

III. The chief priests and the ancients of the people become excited in exaggerating their accusations; but, although they are most grievous and most offensive, Jesus Christ answers not so much as one syllable to refute them. They are all false, and could easily be set aside; and as Pilate knows the falsehood of them, and has a good will to set free this innocent, persecuted Man, he persuades, he urges Him to defend Himself: *Answerest Thou nothing? Behold in how many things they accuse Thee.*<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ has just motives to answer for Himself, since the cause in question concerning Him is one of paramount importance, as it refers to His reputation and His very life. The judge is favorable to Him,—nay, it is the judge who presses Him to speak, being disposed to acquit Him provided only that

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Mark xv, 4.

He plead for Himself. Notwithstanding all this, He remains silent.

But why does He keep silence? Truly His accusers do not deserve an answer from Him; they are too malignant and perverse. Moreover, Pilate does not deserve one for his vain policy by which he wishes to favor justice, but will not risk giving the least displeasure to the Jews. Yet we must say, that His principal motive for silence is that He does not desire to be set free; in order that the Redemption of the world may not be delayed by his liberation. He is silent also to teach us, by His example, how we ought to practise patience in time of adversity.

O divine Saviour! what thanks shall I render Thee for Thy love? Though all my members were changed into tongues, and though I could speak with the tongues even of angels, how could I ever praise and thank Thee worthily? Thou canst easily deliver Thyself from death, and Thou dost not elect to be delivered in order that Thou mayest die for me! O pity, O charity, worthy of a God and proper only to a God!

But if I can not correspond as much as I ought to Thy love, why should I not at least endeavor to imitate Thy example? O my soul, thou frequently dost complain,—at one time because they judge thee or speak of thee wrongfully; at another, because they put the worst interpretation on thy actions, and set down as wrong what thou hast done with a good intention. O vain and foolish complaints! Look at Jesus Christ. When slandered, He is silent and suffers all with patience, and learn when thou art spoken ill of to have patience. And Thou, good Jesus! who givest me so edifying a lesson by Thy example, do Thou also move and strengthen me by Thy grace to imitate Thee.

True patience consists in knowing how to be silent, after the example of Jesus Christ, on those occasions when it might be lawful and advantageous for me to speak and defend myself. But it is not enough to know how to keep silence from a motive of human prudence only; let it be done for love of God.

IV. The Jews, observing that the governor makes no account of their accusations, as they are too frivolous, raise their voices as if in a transport of zeal, to obtain by their clamors the condemnation of Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ is not thereby disturbed. He maintains the same tranquillity in His Heart, the same meekness and gravity in His countenance, and lets them speak, without saying even one word on His part, so that Pilate himself is filled with wonder at what he sees—so singular and so new,—the like of which had never been witnessed in the world.

The Evangelist intimates that the wonder of Pilate was extraordinary, on account of the extraordinary circumstances that accompany the case. He knows that Jesus Christ is innocent. Moreover, he knows that Jesus Christ is a wise and eloquent Man, who would have the greatest facility in making an able and most satisfactory defence of Himself. Consequently, as he beholds Him in manifest danger of death and yet silent and patient, without anxiety or fear, he is finally almost beside himself for wonder, as he seems to see a miracle of superhuman virtue in that prodigious fortitude, the like of which he has never witnessed.

Behold, O my soul! thy Saviour and Redeemer, truly valiant, fearing not all the powers of hell and of the world combined. It is in this way that He has shown His marvelous power to overcome His enemies,—not by force or majesty, but by patience and humility. Oh, how greatly then is that man mistaken who thinks the virtue of fortitude consists in that sort of valor that repels force by force, and one injury by another.

Under this illusion I also have lived, O my God! and it is under its influence that I have contracted the evil habit that if any one speaks a sharp word to me I must answer him five or six still more sarcastic, and that no sooner do I entertain a suspicious thought of some one whom I fancy to be my rival, than I have an insatiable desire to tear him to pieces and dishonor him in the worst possible way. What manner of proceeding is this—how different, O my Jesus,

from Thine! In Thy Passion Thou didst always keep me before Thy eyes. When the occasion presents itself to me to imitate Thee I never have Thee before my eyes. Hence proceeds all my evil. Oh, if I, dust and ashes that I am, only remembered what Thou, the King of Glory, hast done and suffered for me! Impress on my mind and heart, I beseech Thee, that patience, that humility, that silence which Thou didst exercise toward Thy calumnious enemies, and give me grace to imitate Thy holy example, at least in some degree; in such a degree, at least, as is necessary for my salvation and for me to come, one day, to enjoy Thee in Thy glory.

I shall confound myself by reflecting on my great wickedness to see and clearly to know, by the example of Jesus Christ, what I ought to do and yet do not do. I shall weep and pray the divine Majesty to forgive and to assist me.

## CHAPTER XL.

### JESUS CHRIST SENT FROM PILATE TO HEROD.

I. PILATE is inflexible in his resolution not to condemn Jesus Christ, because He knows that He is innocent; but the Jews are at the same time obstinate in their perfidy, insisting on the condemnation of the innocent One. Therefore, not knowing what to do, they bring forward another accusation as their last,—that Jesus Christ is a seducer who, by His doctrines, has subverted not a small number of people, but a countless multitude all through Galilee and throughout Judea. But what avails this accusation? It only serves to make the innocence of Jesus Christ appear so much the more unspotted, and the perversity of the Jews so much the more malignant.

If there were some crime of which they could accuse the Saviour with any truth, it can not be believed that they would have the charity to pass it over in silence, or to excuse it. They would have already declared it in order to



satisfy their envy and their hatred. But they have nothing to say, except that He wearied Himself with journeys and efforts to preach the truth and to instruct the ignorant. Is not this rather a eulogy that brings out in bold relief His distinguished virtue? Pilate himself laughs at this accusation, and we may easily see the wisdom of Jesus Christ in keeping silence; for what reason is there that He should defend Himself, when the fame of the splendid miracles that He has wrought in Judea and in Galilee defends Him?

See, my soul, the predicted malediction which these unhappy Jews bring down upon themselves by representing as a great evil the great good that has been done by the Incarnate Son of God. May it not be that thou art guilty of this grievous crime, too? How often hast thou judged to be passion, persecution, injustice, that just zeal with which others have reproved thee for thy faults? And how frequently hast thou sided with the world in reckoning devotion in thy neighbor to be hypocrisy? Humility to be a want of spirit? Prayer, mortification, piety, to be practices of scrupulosity and melancholy? This is calling good evil, like the Jews in their accusations of Jesus Christ; but do I know how enormous this same wickedness is in me?

As it is proper to the elect to draw good from evil, so does it appertain to the reprobate to draw evil from good. Surely I am reprobate, no less than the Jews, whose character I bear if I do not repent and correct myself of this vice. Ah, my Jesus! I grieve for my wickedness, which springs from a pestilent seed of envy! God of mercy, I beseech Thee, let one spark descend on me of that holy charity which is kind and amiable, which judges no evil and rejoices in the good of others.

I shall take comfort in the thought of Jesus Christ, to whom calumnies are of use to prove His innocence. Moreover, I shall resolve to imitate Him in the patience and resignation to the will of God with which He bears the wrongs and injustices that are offered to Him.

II. Pilate himself was involved in a perplexing difficulty, feeling himself, on the one side, bound in conscience



to acquit and set free Jesus Christ; on the other side, fearing that if he releases Him the Jews will rise in seditious tumults. Therefore, hearing that Jesus Christ was causing confusion in Galilee, this being a province subject to Herod's jurisdiction, and that it was in Galilee also that He had been brought up, with cunning policy he takes occasion to have the judgment of His cause taken off his hands. He sends Him to Herod, who, being a Jew, real or pretended, happens at this time to be in Jerusalem for the Paschal solemnity, leaving it to him to do what he pleases with Him.

Meanwhile the Jews rejoice at this, for Herod, the son of a barbarous father, who had slain all the infants of Bethlehem, being himself likewise of a barbarous disposition, as it was he that caused John the Baptist to be beheaded, they hope to obtain from him the condemnation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, though Jesus Christ is fatigued and weakened by the bonds and torments that He has suffered from the time of His apprehension to the present moment, they drag Him with violence from the hall of Pilate and take Him in haste through the streets, which are filled with people whom the novelty has drawn together.

Behold, my soul, and admire the modest Saviour, dragged, maltreated, abused, and inhumanly struck. This is the fourth journey, beyond measure painful and ignominious, that He has made. He was, in the first place, taken from the garden to Annas, then from Annas to Caiphas; after this, from Caiphas to Pilate, and now from Pilate to Herod. The outrages that are inflicted on Him are continually increasing in proportion as the violence and rage of His enemies increase.

Ah, my soul! stand still at this point and reflect; and while thou repeatest with astonishment: *See what the Son of God suffers for me!* repeat also with sentiments of shame and confusion: *And can it be possible, that after so many mockeries and insults that He has borne for me, I do not know how to endure with patience a cutting word, or to do violence to myself, so as to conquer a single antipathy for*

*Him!* Oh, what a shame that I should be ashamed to suffer in the service of Jesus, who has not been ashamed to suffer so much for me!

Ah, my Jesus! make me love to imitate Thee in the humiliations that Thou hast borne for me with so much love. I know that I shall give Thee pleasure in proportion as I imitate Thee better in this point. Therefore, I accept willingly for Thy love all the contemptuous treatment and dishonor that it shall please Thee to send me for Thy glory. This resolution is difficult and hard to my self-love, but all shall become easy and sweet to me if Thou wilt pour into my soul Thy love, which I humbly implore Thee to do, realizing that that patience is not pleasing to Thee which is practised for human motives alone.

I shall ask myself: If it happen that such or such an outrage is inflicted on me, how shall I behave? Shall I be patient? O Lord, of myself I can promise nothing! Grant me that confidence that I should have in Thy infinite Majesty.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

### JESUS CHRIST PRESENTED TO HEROD.

I. HEROD, being informed that Jesus Christ, willing or not, is about to be brought into his presence by the Jewish guards and soldiery, takes his place without delay upon his royal throne and impatiently waits for His coming. Scarcely does he see Him than he experiences the greatest possible satisfaction, which he shows exteriorly, and receives Him with marks of respectful courtesy, not as a malefactor, but as a personage of quality, renowned for His wisdom and power to work miracles;—as indeed, he had for a long time desired the opportunity of seeing Him.

O Jesus, Eternal Word, Wisdom Incarnate! what a grand occasion hast Thou now to speak and make known the sanctity of Thy life and doctrine! This prince eagerly sighs to hear the oracles of Thy lips. If Thou speakest

now, Thou mayest be sure that Thou wilt not be despised, but applauded. Speak then, and as, at other times, Thou hast condescended to preach to the crowds and to receive their praises, do not now disdain to make a discourse also in the court, where the king and all the great ones of his kingdom entertain an affectionate sentiment toward Thee.

Jesus Christ is silent. It is written of Him that His discourses would always be ordered with judgment, and now He considers it judicious to be silent. And for what cause? Because, it is true, He sees Herod disposed to hear Him and to praise Him, but not to obey and honor Him with the faith that is due to the word of God. Therefore, He prefers to be despised rather than to be vainly praised. O silence, more instructive than any lesson! O my soul! do you understand what your Saviour teaches you? This lesson is easily understood if you will put it in practice. It is that you should, as much as possible, fly from the praises of men, and never be of the number of those who speak in order to be praised and honored.

O my God! it is in this regard that I fall into sin, being blinded by self-love. I am extremely desirous of praise and seek it greedily, as if it were a substantial food for me. But, in fact, is not this madness? What is there in me to make praise suitable to me? I have nothing in me of my own but evil, and this deserves blame. If there is anything good about me, either interior or exterior, it is all Thine and the praise of it is due to Thee. Ah, most humble Saviour, Lover of abjection more than of honor, banish from me this spirit of vanity that governs me, and make me know the truth,—that I am a blind fool for making an account of human praises; a proud fool, for arrogating to myself those praises that are not due to me; a thief, for usurping the praises that are due to Thee alone.

He who seeks to be praised by men is blamed by God. What will all the praises of the world avail me when God comes to judge me, and perhaps to condemn me on account of them!

II. King Herod desires two things of Jesus Christ:

one is to see Him work a miracle, such as turning water into wine, multiplying bread, or anything else of the sort that may excite wonder, gratify curiosity, and captivate the senses. His other desire is to hear Him speak, as he had heard that there was a wonderful sweetness and force in His words. By a variety of questions then does He urge Him to say who He is, what doctrine He teaches, by what virtue He performs so many miracles; and thus he entreats and provokes Him to answer by all means the most pressing. But Jesus Christ, far from gratifying him by working miracles, does not even condescend to pronounce a single word.

As Jesus Christ assumed in the presence of Pilate an air of superiority, answering him only so much as He thought fit and was pleased to answer, and thus making Himself known as a King of a higher order, above all temporal kings, so also He maintains the same authoritative tone of superiority in the presence of Herod, and makes it plain that this king has no power to force Him even once to open His lips. He consents to be in subjection so far as regards the exercise of His meekness and patience, but not for that of His power nor of His wisdom. As God, He refuses to reveal His Divinity to one who proudly presumes on himself; as Man, He humbles Himself and seeks to shun display.

Learn a lesson, my soul! Jesus Christ is come into the world to condemn, not to satisfy, human ambition. Oh, how essential it is to be humble, if we would enjoy the consolations of God! How important it is to be humble, if we would hear and learn the truths of God! Jesus, as God, shows thee in the case of Herod how little care He has of the proud. Jesus, as Man, makes thee see in Himself how necessary it is to be humble if thou wilt imitate Him. By what He could do, and what He could say, He might gain for Himself every degree of honor at court,—and right well He deserves it. Nevertheless He despises it. I also, even supposing I deserve to be truly honored, ought not to make more account of the honor of the world than of empty

smoke. But what claim have I to honor? And yet, without any claim to it, I love it so much and long for it and seek it with such immoderate insistence.

O my God! in order to be cured of pride, and to obtain humility, I have need of Thy assistance. I have a kind of dim light to enable me to see Thy greatness and my own nothingness, but I have not sufficient light. Ah, most compassionate Saviour! of whom it is written that *Thou wilt not quench the smoking flax*,<sup>1</sup> but wilt rather kindle it into flame that it may give more light, enlighten me to know myself well, that from this knowledge I may ascend to the knowledge of Thee. Make me know my own misery, in order that I may implore Thy mercy.

I should desire no honor except that truly glorious honor that shall be given by God to the elect on the Day of Judgment.

III. Jesus Christ is absolutely silent in the presence of Herod, because Herod is utterly unworthy to hear His divine word. In the first place, unworthy because of the incestuous lust to which he is abandoned and by which he has become as a senseless brute, that has neither capacity for understanding divine mysteries nor disposition to draw profit from them. Unworthy, again, because he is a wicked hypocrite, who disguises his wickedness under a cloak of piety and makes a semblance of spiritual sentiments, while, in fact, he loves nothing but the pleasures of sense. He lies to himself by his perverse intentions, and pretends to wish to honor Jesus Christ at the very moment that he is mocking His sanctity.

Consequently, the Saviour of the world has just reason to keep silence. Alas! it is an evil sign, indeed, when God is silent and ceases to speak to a soul! The holy Fathers feared nothing more than the silence of God. Hence it is that David, also, in the Psalms goes on repeating so often to the Lord his petition that He would vouchsafe not to be silent; for woe to that soul to which God ceases to speak by His inspirations! How can that soul love the truth

(1) *Isaias* xlii, 3.



without the Master to instruct it in the truth? How can it walk in the straight road to heaven without the Guide to direct it?

This reflection is terrible. If it be assuredly true that the man is not worthy to hear the voice of God who gives himself to impurity or to hypocrisy, then I have reason to watch with the utmost attention over myself, to guard myself against both the one and the other of these vices. Infinitely opposed to God, who is infinite purity, is the most foul sin of impurity. Infinitely opposed again to God, who is infinite truth, is the most contemptible sin of hypocrisy. And what wonder is it that God speaks neither to him who is impure, nor to him who is hypocritical.

O my God, my most loving Saviour! I pray Thee by Thy charity, which is immense, that Thou wilt never be so angry with me as that Thy mercy should be silent in my regard. I confess that I deserve that Thou shouldst no more speak to my heart because my heart is full of impurity, of vanity, and malice. But do Thou, I beseech Thee, to whom nothing is impossible, find ways to set me free from my evil passions and make me capable of hearing Thy loving voice. Act not toward me as Thou didst toward Herod, refusing to speak a single word to me. Speak to me, inspire me, good Jesus! withdraw me from evil, excite me to good. I ardently desire to hear Thee, because I also desire perfectly to obey Thee.

I shall conceive an abhorrence of these two vices, of impurity and hypocrisy, pondering their deformity and considering them as most hateful to the divine Majesty.

IV. For our instruction, we must reflect upon two other reasons why Jesus Christ says not a word in the presence of Herod. The first is, because it was a long time since this king had heard of the fame of the doctrines and miracles of the Saviour. He had, indeed, conceived some desire of seeing and hearing Him; but having had several occasions of doing so, particularly when Jesus Christ was preaching in Galilee, he yet had never seen nor heard Him, because he had never cared to do it on account of his excessive attach-

ment to the things of time, which made him careless in regard to those of eternity. And God justly refuses His graces to those who, captivated by the vanities of the world, slothfully neglect their duties. Good desires become utterly unprofitable to those who do not know how to find time to put them in execution.

The second reason why Jesus is silent is because Herod, now having a convenient opportunity to enjoy His divine presence, and to see and hear Him for the good of his soul, thinks not of his own spiritual profit. He thinks only of gratifying, in the first place, the curiosity of his senses by seeing Him work miracles, and the curiosity of his understanding by hearing His eloquence. Thus it happens that God, by a just judgment, refuses the helps of His grace to a man who seeks Him not with the piety with which he ought to seek Him, but with vain curiosity. Therefore, through curiosity no fruit is reaped either from sermons or from reading pious books. God speaks not to the heart of the curious.

We must add one more motive for the silence of Jesus, and this is the one most worthy of Him. If He were to speak or to work some miracle, Herod might probably set Him free from the power of the Jews. Therefore, He remains silent in order that neither might His death be prevented nor the Redemption of the world delayed. O prodigious charity! and how can I, my Jesus! ever correspond with it? How can I thank Thee so worthily as to discharge myself of infinite obligations? Thy silence was the exercise of rigorous justice in respect to Herod. It was prompted by a spirit of loving mercy toward me. Extend over me still this same mercy; not, however, by being silent, but by speaking.

Truly I deserve that Thou shouldst speak no more to me, because of my sloth, through which I have so frequently neglected Thy lights, and by reason moreover of my curiosity, by which, in the study of truth, I have sought rather to gratify my intellect than to move my will. But, O Lord! look on Thy merits, and not on my demerits. Take from

me all that which may be a hindrance to grace, so that I may worthily receive it and worthily correspond with all its movements.

How many graces do I deprive myself of by yielding to sloth in things that appertain to God, and by the curiosity of the intellect, which I indulge in hearing sermons, in prayer, and spiritual reading! Oh, how important it is that I should amend!

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## CHAPTER XLII.

### JESUS CHRIST MOCKED IN THE COURT OF HEROD.

I. THE Jews fear that Herod may set Jesus Christ free, and so they become more and more pertinacious in repeating their accusations with a loud voice; then, seeing that their accusations do not gain credit, it is highly probable that the chief priests by whom Jesus Christ is accompanied, drawing near to this impious king to irritate and embitter his mind, call to his remembrance the infants whom his father put to death solely on account of this Man, who even from His birth was saluted King of the Jews. They remind him, also, that it was only on account of this Man that he had been checked by John the Baptist in his amorous desires; adding, moreover, all that could exasperate a political, proud and cruel mind. All is malignity, disguised under the appearance of zeal. Is it possible for the passion of envy to be either more blind in its judgment or more extravagant in its excess?

Meanwhile Jesus is silent. Although He foresees that by speaking He may gain the reputation of a wise man, and that by being silent He shall be treated as an ignorant, stupid fellow, He judges it better to have ignorance and stupidity imputed to Him for a time than to make a vain display of His knowledge. This is a lesson that the world can in no way understand, because the world does not know either where the treasures of true wisdom exist or by what

means they may be found. For this reason it is that in the world the number of fools is infinite, because the number can not be computed of those who speak much in order to be reckoned wise. By His example, Jesus Christ shows us how precious and how glorious is a patient silence; since, while persecuted by slanderers and whisperers, He does not open His mouth for the purpose of either crushing His adversaries or of exalting Himself.

O skilful Master, how admirably is our human ignorance instructed by Thee! O skilful Physician, with what excellent remedies dost Thou treat our human pride! It is by silence that Thou hast given us the knowledge of Thy innocence, by silence that Thou hast perfected the work of Thy wisdom, by silence that Thou hast deserved the title of Lamb come to be sacrificed for the Redemption of the world. Ah, good Jesus! cast one look of kindness on my misery.

Thou seest how far I am from imitating Thee, how little experienced I am in the art of silence. I know how to be silent when silence may be reckoned wisdom. I know not how to be silent when silence may be imputed weakness. Behold my pride displaying itself on all occasions. And who can help me to conquer it but Thou alone, by imparting to me the humility which Thou hast practised? He that is humble finds no difficulty in keeping silence; and as this humility is wanting to me, this is what I ask and hope of Thee with confidence that I may be favorably heard. I know that Thou delightest in the humble, and at least for this I trust that Thou wilt grant me the grace of humility which I ask of Thee, that I may be pleasing to Thyself.

Sometimes I consider it necessary to speak in my justification and defence, but if I can learn to be silent for the love of God, God will order that I shall be more fully justified by silence than by conversation.

II. Herod having asked Jesus Christ many questions, and hearing no answers returned to him, takes offence at being thus disappointed in his expectations. He grows angry and begins to make game of Him, and set Him at



nought with scornful signs and words, putting Him down for an idiot, a fool, a booby, who is silent because He has neither sense nor ability to speak two words as He should. Behold to what point of the lowest abjection is reduced the infinite wisdom of God, which is worthy of all the admiration and adoration of the world. See how, before all the tribunals of the synagogue and of the world, of Judea and Galilee, Jesus is treated. Jesus the Son of the Most High, the Word of the Eternal Father! on all sides what shame, what ignominy cast on Him, to the point that He is reckoned a fool, to be made a mockery of! He suffers all, but oh, with what patience, meekness, humility!

Whether before Annas and Caiphas, whether before Pilate and Herod, it is clearly seen that if He is silent it is not because He does not know how to speak in His own defence, but precisely because He sees that it is most expedient to be silent and He does not choose to speak. Meanwhile He exercises His Heart in acts of the most sublime virtues. Ah, my Jesus, true God! for what reason hast Thou chosen to conceal the greatness and the majesty of Thy almighty Godhead under so great humility? What need hast Thou to humble Thyself in a manner so unbecoming and so strange?

Comprehend the truth, O my soul! God has not humbled Himself for any need or profit of His own, since in His own essence He is supreme and glorious Goodness. He has thus humbled Himself for us, there being no other way to offer to the Eternal Father an adequate satisfaction for our excessive pride than by this humility. O prodigy, O spectacle! Has a God been pleased so deeply to abase Himself for me as to be esteemed a madman, as one that has suffered in His senses, who does not know how to use His reason? Has a God been content to be made light of for me, because of my pride? Yes; by my pride I have dishonored God, and the divine honor could not receive adequate reparation save by these humiliations of a God-Man.

Therefore, O pride, how detestable thou art! And yet this is the vice which is the most deeply rooted within me,



to which I am the most addicted and for the cure of which I take no pains whatever. O most humble Saviour! make me partake of the merits of Thy humility by giving me fervor and strength to conquer in every way this my predominant vice. On this depends my salvation. Let me do what I may, so long as I am proud I shall at the same time be a reprobate.

I shall be ashamed at the thought that, God having come from heaven upon earth on purpose to practise and to teach humility, I who am made of earth will not condescend to humble myself on the earth. O miserable worm, and yet proud!

III. Jesus Christ, who for His silence was an object of wonder to Pilate, is now an object of indignation and contempt to Herod. It is true, that by neither of these iniquitous judges has He been condemned; yet, neither has He been absolved; because neither of them has the courage to oppose himself to the rage of the wicked Jews. But let us consider the wickedness of man, with an eye to the doings of God's providence. It is said of Herod, that for a long time he had desired to behold Jesus Christ while He was absent from him! Now that he has Him before him, in what way does he despise Him! What malice is this, to desire the gifts of God in order to make light of them with mockery and scorn!

Nevertheless, we must remark how Providence orders that human wickedness should coöperate with His most profound counsels. It is necessary that Jesus Christ should be put to death, this being required by the infallible will of God; but, as He has to be condemned in such a way as to be acknowledged innocent by all, behold how after Pilate has declared Him innocent Herod also declares Him innocent, as he does not judge Him deserving of punishment. If the accusation of the Jews were true, that Jesus was a seducer of the people, Herod would not treat Him with mockery, but with severity, and he would avail himself of the occasion of giving vent to his spite by condemning Him.

It is then the truth that He is innocent, and the Jews are convicted of falsehood.

O how adorable are Thy mysteries, O my God! I rejoice that Thy innocence is known to all the world, for that man is too blind and malignant who will not acknowledge it. I rejoice, O Saint of saints, Thou who art truly holy in all Thy works, that in spite of all the envy of men and devils Thy sanctity shows itself immaculate, without a blemish. But grant me also to deplore my wickedness, which resembles that of the impious.

Few are the days on which in my prayers I do not desire the grace of Thy lights, and of Thy helps, O my God! to know and to do all those things that please Thee. But when Thou dost offer me, as Thou offerest me at all hours, with infinite benignity, this identical grace, how do I, after all, correspond with it? My ingratitude and unfaithfulness can not be hidden from Thy Majesty. Graces from Thee are those many inspirations by which I feel myself excited, at one time to mortify my passions, at another, my tastes; but those graces I positively abuse, since not only I turn them to no account, but act altogether in opposition to that which I feel inspired to do. And what must I say of myself, desiring grace as I do in order to despise it, as in fact I am continually despising it? Ah, my Jesus! destroy my wickedness, fortify my inconstancy, and give me that grace of which I have the greatest need, namely, to co-operate efficaciously with all Thy graces.

I shall have to render an account before the tribunal of God of every grace that is given me, and my eternal ruin may depend on my contempt of one only. I shall determine in this respect to live with exceeding care, fidelity and caution.

IV. After the example of Herod, the whole court rises up against Jesus Christ, emulating one another to treat Him with the greatest contempt. There is a mixture of Galilean and Jewish soldiers, all of whom, looking on Him as a fool, make a sport of tossing Him backward and forward, with jeers and jokes insulting to Him in the extreme.

Thus the two nations—that of the Jews in which He was born, and the Galilean in which He was reared,—unite to mock Him most injuriously. For a trial of His perfect humility there is no sort of ill-treatment and outrage so disgraceful but they inflict it upon Him; and each one provoking Him to complain or to manifest resentment, He neither complains nor is angry, and His afflicted Humanity does nothing in its abjection but expose its necessities and recommend itself to the Eternal Father.

These impious wretches occupy their minds with discovering how to deride and insult Him, one more bitterly than another. But if any one could behold what passes in the Heart of Jesus Christ, he would still see how He repeats every instant most virtuous acts, especially of charity, sometimes toward God, resigning Himself to His will; sometimes toward those who ill-treat Him, praying for them, and imploring upon them, in return for every contumely that He suffers, so many heavenly benedictions.

He is the example of the predestinate, 'come to teach us what we must do for our salvation. As He has already preached by word of mouth that whosoever will be saved must be meek, must moderate his anger and mortify all desires for revenge, rather wishing well to those who use him ill,—now He goes on to preach us the same doctrine with most efficacious example. He foresees that this meekness will appear difficult to some; nay, almost impossible. Therefore He presents us with a perfect ideal of it in Himself, so that for one who will not be meek there may be no excuse.

O Jesus, Guide and Master of the meek, how much I am obliged to Thee! I am truly one of those who find no little difficulty in being meek. What is the reason of this, if not my pride alone? O Jesus most meek! clothe me, I pray Thee, with Thy spirit, so that on every occasion when I meet with contempt and mockery I may offer up to Thee the resentment to which I find myself moved. In order to be meek I must be humble, but I shall be neither humble nor meek if I am not supported by Thy helps. One of these

helps I now ask of Thee. It is one that Thou hast merited for me by Thy meekness and by Thy humility.

To render endurable those vexations that may befall me in respect to honor, I shall impress on my mind the example of Jesus Christ. This will, more than anything else, sweeten for me whatever causes me pain and bitterness.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### JESUS CHRIST SENT BACK FROM HEROD TO PILATE.

I. HEROD knows not what to do with Jesus Christ. He does not wish on the one hand to condemn Him, because He is innocent; nor, on the other, to liberate Him, lest he should set the Jews against himself; therefore he determines to send Him back to Pilate. He has Him clothed in a white outer garment. This is a sort of dress, it is true, which was worn by gentle folk and princes; but in the case of Jesus Christ it is used only in derision, to expose Him still more to the jeers of all, as a fool who has proved himself destitute of sense by the strange notion he has of becoming a king.

O venerable mysteries of sovereign Wisdom! The ragged old white livery that Herod puts on Him for a sign of stupidity God designs to make at the same time a sign of innocence. It was necessary that the Saviour, sent to redeem the world from its sins, should be holy and innocent, without the stain of the slightest sin. Behold Him here, clothed in white, as a glorious token that He is the Lamb of God, destined to be the expiation, not of His own sins, but of those of others. Herod would not have clothed Him thus if he had found Him guilty of any wickedness. There is no doubt that all he does is done with the sole intention of mocking Him, but there is not the slightest doubt that he would not have attempted to mock Him had he discovered any crimes to be punished with severity.

O my Jesus! how pleased I am that Thy innocence is

acknowledged; how displeased, at the same time, that this same innocence should be so ill-treated. I admire Thy invincible patience, but still more Thy incomprehensible charity; for why hast Thou chosen, on account of me, to be clothed with a garment so ridiculous and so dishonorable to Thy most honored sanctity, if not to cover at the same time my most foul deformities? Oh, power of divine love, which has been able to love a creature so wicked, so abominable as I! and to love it in order to beautify and clothe it with most precious garments of grace, of virtue and of salvation! How shall I be able to return Thee thanks? Since we can not correspond with love except by love, instruct me, I beseech Thee, what I must do to love Thee worthily? Assist my wretched heart so to unite itself to Thee by love, that there may be no power in the world or the flesh to separate me from Thee. It is impossible that while remaining the sinner that I am I should unite myself to Thee; but clothe me with that holy love of which it is written that it covers a multitude of sins, so that there may be nothing in me to prevent that close union which is effected with Thee in this world by grace, and shall be still more perfectly made in heaven by glory.

In order that my desire of loving God may not be ineffectual, I shall examine what there is in me that is opposed to the love of God and what I am disposed to do for this love. I shall make on this subject some particular resolution.

II. Jesus Christ was clothed in white in His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, and this was a garment of glory. He is now, also, in His Passion, clothed with white, and this is for Him a garment of disgrace. See, my soul, thy Lord led back from the house of Herod to that of Pilate through the most populous streets of the city. One treats Him as a fool, another as a malefactor. Nothing in the world is reckoned more vile than He. In all places and by all persons of every condition, by young and old, nobles and plebeians, He is most grievously outraged, without even one being found to take His part and to assist Him.



All rejoice over Him, beholding Him loaded with reproaches and insults. His calumniators alone are in pain, and gnash their teeth at the sight of Him; because they see in that white garment a sign of His innocence, they feel their own consciences reproach them with the falseness of the accusations.

Ah, Herod, Herod, who didst wish to see miracles, what art thou doing now? Come and see. Behold a stupendous miracle, if thou wilt acknowledge it. A God grievously offended in His honor by the most vile of His creatures; and yet He is silent, He shows no resentment, and is patient.

If this is not a miracle worthy of God alone, where shall we find one that is? And how many such miracles does God work at all times and in all places throughout the world? When we see, on the one hand, that the Lord God is offended by so many sins; and when we see, on the other, that this Almighty God, instead of punishing us, has patience,—at every moment supports our life, while we, at every moment deserve death, are we not constrained in astonishment to exclaim, O what miracles? Miracles of mercy, which by this token alone are proved infinite.

These miracles cause no wonder because they are incessant. How long, O my God! shall I remain so blind as not to acknowledge them, and so ungrateful as not to be thankful for them? I adore Thy mercy, which is, in my regard especially, exceeding in all tenderness, and confessing that the miracles are innumerable which already at this present moment Thou hast wrought for me in preserving to me the life both of my body and of my soul, with sentiments of profound humiliation, and confounded at so great goodness on Thy part, I give Thee my most cordial thanks. And since, for no other cause, Thou dost continue to bear with me and to make me partake daily more and more of Thy mercies, I pray Thee, O my Jesus! by all the merits of Thy most sacred Passion, to grant me this grace, that I may not abuse Thy mercy. To the multitude of mercies that Thou has wrought for me add one more, that Thou wilt wholly change my heart, so that from being hard, dry, cold as it is,

it may become tender, fervent, and inflamed with Thy love.

Let us make haste, and at length begin in earnest to love God. The time is long that I have misspent in offending Him, and the time left to me to love Him is less than I imagine.

III. Let us consider Our Lord Jesus Christ looked upon by the whole court of Herod as a fool, and as such led through the city of Jerusalem, while all those mockeries were inflicted on Him which an insolent rabble will usually inflict on a real fool. He is the Author of wisdom and the Controller of the wise; who infuses wisdom into the simple, and who being from His childhood full of wisdom, has by His wisdom rendered Himself admirable to all. Wisdom radiates from His countenance, and yet He is treated as a fool; nay rather, so does Wisdom itself choose and determine, that whosoever sees Him in that dress of a sham prince should make game of Him as though He were a fool.

Oh, if we could only learn, as we should, this mysterious lesson! It is in this way that Jesus has thought fit to save us, namely, by being looked upon by the silly world as mad. It is likewise in this way that we must work out on our part our eternal salvation, since all the wise ones of the world are reprobate, and in order to be numbered with the elect we must by the world be judged to be fools. Understand this clearly. The world reckons as wisdom, pride, revenge, fraud, duplicity, cunning, injustice, iniquity; and it is this very wisdom that is the mark of reprobation. The world reckons as folly, simplicity, humility, sincerity, poverty of spirit, patience; and it is by a folly like this, of which Jesus Christ gave us an example, that the elect are marked out.

To what class do I now belong? Am I of those whom the world reckons wise, or of those whom the world reckons fools? O my God! how greatly hitherto have I been deceived, while attaching myself entirely to making my appearance among the wise of the world! Blinded by vanity, I have never chosen to understand the truth,—that the real fools are they whom the world esteems as wise, and the really wise are they whom the world counts as fools.

But now, O my Jesus! I understand this truth by reflecting on Thy example. Thus it is. No man is truly wise but he who is the imitator of Thy holy virtues, and all those are fools who, in the pursuit of vice, have the false, foolish wisdom of the world.

Ah, Thou Wisdom increate, Thou eternal Wisdom! pour forth Thy spirit into me, through which I may practise virtue indeed,—then let all the world laugh at me if they please. I am resolved to save myself. Provided I am saved, it is nothing to me that the worldly reckon me to be a fool. Now the simplicity of the just is laughed at, and virtue is not esteemed by proud worldlings, but the time shall come when its brightness will shine forth with glory, and whoever has followed it shall be eternally blessed. In order to be wise, I must acknowledge myself a fool. I am really a fool as long as I follow the maxims and opinions of the world, which are opposed to the truths of the Gospel.

IV. The Evangelists conclude the account of the sending of Jesus Christ from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod to Pilate, with saying that Herod and Pilate, being enemies, were on that occasion reconciled. It is not without mystery that He who was come to put all the world in peace should unite, in peace, even His wicked judges themselves. This is a figure of the people of all nations being gathered, as they are to be, into the unity of the Church. He has been well pleased to show in this manner how much He loves peace and concord among her redeemed children. But let us ponder on the fact.

Did Jesus Christ exhort these two princes to peace? Did He persuade them to be united, and endeavor by manœuvring to reconcile them? Nothing of the kind. We only read that Jesus Christ was sent by Pilate to Herod, and sent back by Herod to Pilate, and that without His having uttered a word peace was immediately restored between them. The simple presence of Jesus Christ in bonds and chains prevailed on a misbelieving Jew and a profane Gentile to lay aside their hatred and become friends. And shall it be that Jesus Christ, entering so frequently within us

with His true and real presence, in the most Holy Communion, will not be able to influence us so far as to cause us to lay aside the rancor and the aversion that we entertain against our neighbors? Frightful comparison!

This meditation should fill me with confusion; for, in truth, what sort of fact is this, that the presence of Jesus Christ should be so efficacious to join in friendship two politicians who do not believe in Him, and that the same Christ, who so often enters within me, not accompanied by ruffians, but escorted by the angels of peace, should be unable to keep me united by the bonds of charity with my neighbor? How strange that during the Passion of Christ two inveterate enemies are made friends, and although in every Communion of mine that same Passion is commemorated, I, on the contrary, break peace and charity with my friends for any trifling vain point of honor.

O my God, how hard and perverse and wicked is this heart of mine! When I receive Thee in Communion, and nevertheless live in discord and ill-will with my brethren, I do, in fact, change in my own regard Thy most august Supper into a table of devils. O deadly malice! I am sorry for it, and accuse myself of it, and through Thy assistance, which I implore, I promise entire amendment. O most gentle Saviour, Peacemaker between earth and heaven! refuse me not this grace which I humbly crave of Thee: that is, the grace to maintain, as far as in me lies, fraternal charity with all. This is the virtue most beloved and most recommended by Thee, and it is in the acquisition of this, more than of all the rest, that I must show my zeal.

Whenever it happens that I am vexed with any one I shall recollect myself and listen within myself, not to my turbulent passions, but to Jesus Christ, whose words are always words of peace and charity.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

*JESUS CHRIST COMPARED BY PILATE TO BARABBAS.*

I. *PILATE* beholds *Jesus Christ* brought back to him, and as he had previously admired the wisdom of His prudent answers, he is now greatly surprised that so wise a man should be paraded as a fool. He finds consolation in the thought that *Herod* had not discovered, any more than himself, matter for His condemnation. Still he is annoyed at having to take in hand once more this cause, from which he was most desirous to be freed. Therefore, seeing no way of escape and knowing how perfectly innocent *Jesus* was, he calls to him those rulers of the *Jews* and tells them candidly his opinion,—that notwithstanding their accusations, he finds no fault in this Man. However, as *Herod* also had formed the same judgment, he will, indeed, in order to please them, inflict on Him a severe correction, but he is determined to set Him free.

Who will not exalt the providence of God in the watchful care that He has over the just? On the side of *Jesus Christ*, to bear witness to His innocence are His two judges,—one a governor, the other a king. Against Him as accusers are the *Jews*, who have not one creditable witness to prove Him guilty. *Jesus* is silent, and truth speaks loudly for Him, making clear His innocence by testimonies above all exception. The *Jews* cry Him down with calumnies, and their lies have not even one voice to give them support. Which must we believe—the candor of the judges, or the malice of the calumniators? Truth is powerful and conquers, and innocence is splendidly defended. If the guilt of high treason, which is imputed to *Jesus*, could be proved with any probability, *Pilate* would not be treating of His liberation. While he thus wishes to set Him free, he also declares Him innocent.

O most holy *Jesus*! here I would make with Thee acts both of compassion for the woes Thou sufferest, and of congratulation with Thee for Thy acknowledged innocence, but I ask Thy permission to reflect at this point upon my-



self. Truth, which has justified Thee before the tribunals of the world—what justice will it do me when Thy Majesty shall come on a high throne to judge me? It is truth that on the Judgment Day shall separate the elect and the reprobate, and shall it then be possible to say of me what was said of Thee, that in me there is no crime deserving of death! My conscience terrifies me, for of how many iniquities am I guilty! How often have I merited eternal death! Thou art silent now, because Thou art innocent; but I shall be silent then, filled with confusion, because I shall not know what to say in my defence.

I can expect nothing for my sins but to be condemned. Yet I hope, O my Jesus! by Thy merits to be saved, since Thy merits are infinitely greater than my demerits. Eternal Father! I offer Thee in satisfaction for my sins Thine own most loving Son. Look through His Humanity on my miserable frailty. It is through Jesus Thy Son that I implore Thy mercy, and it is on this account that I trust it will not be denied me. On this account it is that I hope to be saved, because He is my life and my salvation for everlasting ages of ages.

No one is saved except by innocence or by penance. Therefore, since I am not innocent I shall apply myself to become penitent, and shall especially exercise myself in sorrowing over my sins.

II. The Jews can not make up their minds to be tranquil, however earnestly Pilate assures them of the innocence of Jesus Christ. The pagan governor, who loves justice more than the professors of the divine law do, still does not give up the defence of innocence. He perceives that these impious men, under the dominion of passion, are incapable of reason, and he has recourse to an expedient that strikes him as convenient. He was accustomed to confer a favor on the Jews at the solemnity of the Passover: it was to liberate one prisoner, whomsoever they might choose. Consequently he avails himself of the opportunity, and proposes to them Jesus Christ in order that He may be set free, if not on the plea of justice, as an

innocent Man, at least by an act of grace, as one guilty;—according to the ancient custom, in memory of the Hebrew people's being set free from the slavery of Egypt. Furthermore, to ensure the success of this plan, what does Pilate do?

Having in prison a certain man called Barabbas, who was infamous and hateful to all on account of his enormities, he proposes him, together with Jesus Christ, that one or the other might be chosen, being persuaded that they will be ashamed to ask for Barabbas, as a favor, and will infallibly prefer Jesus. But, though the intentions of the judge are excellent, how great meanwhile is the indignity put on the Son of God made Man, to be compared to a public malefactor? It would be doing a great injustice to put in comparison with Him even the most exalted of the angels. For to which of the angelic spirits has the Eternal Father said, *Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased?*<sup>1</sup> And what are we to think of there being placed in competition of merit with Him a miscreant, the worst in Jerusalem? Nevertheless He suffers the affront with a joyful Heart, and for what end? To confirm us in the virtue of patience, and to detach us, by His example, from that immoderate apprehension that we have of the ignominies of the world.

O adorable Redeemer! what patience Thou dost display! When Herod despised Thee as if Thou wast a fool it was nothing but a natural defect that was imputed to Thee, and this was compatible with innocence. But that Thou shouldst now be exposed to the judgment of a perfidious multitude to decide which is the more worthless and the more deserving of death, Barabbas or Thyself! This is the most poignant dishonor that can be cast upon Thy most pure sanctity, and yet Thou hast patience to suffer it. Ah, my Jesus! and when shall I learn to make great account of humiliations, since Thou hast rendered them glorious by taking them upon Thyself? Regulate, I beseech Thee, by the rule of truth, my previous opinions, which are attached

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke iii, 22

to vanity, then it will become easy for me in all circumstances to maintain patience. Impress Thy example upon my heart and I shall no longer be ashamed of the dishonor of the world, but shall rather glory in it. In certain things malice at times will be imputed to me where, by the divine mercy, it does not exist, and from this I shall take occasion to accept humiliations with patience, in imitation of Jesus Christ.

III. Let us imagine to ourselves Pilate on the balcony showing Jesus Christ to the Jews, and saying to them: *You have a custom that I should release one unto you at the Pasch; will you, therefore, that I release unto you the king of the Jews?*<sup>1</sup> And then let us ponder the grievousness of the affront. Who is Jesus? Who is Barabbas? Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father, full of grace and truth, the splendor of the glory of God, the figure of His Majesty, possessed of almighty power. Barabbas is a seditious, murderous robber; an assassin, infamous for his notorious, enormous outrages; and oh! that a comparison should be instituted between them by saying: Which will you have? Which pleases you the more? As if between light and darkness, between the best and the worst, there was little or no difference! In this the affliction of the Saviour was most sensible, and it is thus that He bitterly complained by the Prophet, *To whom have you likened Me, and made Me equal, and compared Me, and made Me like?*<sup>2</sup>

But is not this what we ourselves frequently do? Every time that there is question of committing sin the understanding proposes to the will, on the one side Jesus Christ, on the other Barabbas. That is, on the one side the Creator, on the other the creature. On the one side the sovereign Good, who is God; on the other a most vile pleasure; and it says, Which of the two is better and the more expedient to be chosen? Most unworthy proposal, to balance that which is best! Why, take all that is beautiful and rich and

(1) St. Matt. xxvii, 17.

(2) Isaias xlv, 5.

extraordinary on earth and in heaven, what is all this compared in the most remote degree with God?

And yet how often in the day does it happen that this is done by me? Though anything the very greatest be presented to my heart, to claim its love in comparison with God, I ought to faint away and reproach myself with the utmost abhorrence and immediately exclaim, *Who is like to God?*<sup>1</sup> How much more when there is offered me some miserable gratification of sensuality or ambition? Nevertheless, how often do I stand slothfully balancing which is the better, the divine Goodness or a vile vanity? Thus I do in practice, by the negligence with which I stop to think whether I should accept or reject the temptation.

O my Jesus! I then compare Thee with Barabbas. And who will give me tears to weep over these negligences that I have hitherto esteemed venial imperfections, not worth thinking of? I grieve over them, O my God! and resolve with Thy assistance to cry out at once at the first assault of any sinful thought, whatever it may be, *Who is like to God*, magnificent in holiness, worthy of esteem and love above all things?

I shall behave in such a way as not to be obliged to accuse myself in confession of tepidity in driving away temptations. At most, to be able to say that I have not entertained that horror for them that I should have done.

IV. It seems that Pilate may be excused for comparing Jesus Christ with Barabbas, as well because, in his way of speaking, he makes Him appear innocent, as also because, innocent or guilty, he only has in view to set Him free. However, it can not be denied that he was in fact grievously to blame, for if he knows that Jesus is innocent, why not avail himself of his authority to set Him free? Why not oppose himself with valor to the fury of the Jews in defence of truth and justice? It is true, he does not condemn Him; still, he does not acquit Him, and knowingly he exposes Him to be condemned, and abandons the duty of his own state for the sake of not offending the Jews. He prac-

(<sup>1</sup>) Exodus xv, 11.



tically shows that it matters not to him that innocence should be condemned provided it appears that this is not by his fault, but only on account of the envy and malice of others.

Behold a picture of what happens, I shall not say commonly, in the world, but especially in myself. Oh, how cunning is my self-love in hiding vanity under the semblance of truth; in covering up the movements of concupiscence with the pretence of conscience and throwing a veil of good intentions over evil actions! My heart is deep, but God sees all its lurking places, and how I contrive by hidden ways to satisfy my passions in those very actions in which I seem to be seeking nothing but His glory! I sometimes make my intentions give the lie to my actions; sometimes my actions give the lie to my intentions. I am ruled by human respect, and not unfrequently, in order that I may not displease men I do things displeasing to God. What Pilate did once, I do often. I know that the divine Goodness is most lovely, and yet I do not love it and have not courage to oppose libertines that I may prevent transgressions of His divine law.

Ah, my God! is this loving Thee with all my soul, with all my heart, and above all things, as my duty requires? I repent of my wicked tepidity and inconstancy in loving Thee, in spite of all the lights and all the helps which Thy mercy deigns to bestow upon me. Ah, look on my great misery with the benignant eye of Thy infinitely greater pity, and multiply grace in my soul in order that the virtue may be multiplied in me that is needful for me; in order that I may love Thee with fulness of heart, with fidelity, fervor, and courage, and that I may be prepared to meet and to endure a thousand deaths rather than ever offend Thee again. Cause me to abominate this duplicity of heart which makes me a hypocrite, desirous of serving Thee, but with this reserve—that I may not displease the eyes of the world.

He who fears falling out with the world can not long continue without offending God. This maxim is true. I



shall examine in what things I am afraid of displeasing the world, that I may fortify myself on those points and ward off my danger.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

### JESUS CHRIST REJECTED BY THE JEWS, IN FAVOR OF BARABBAS.

I. No sooner has Pilate signified to the chief priests his intention of offering Jesus and Barabbas to the choice of the people than they immediately make a party and go up and down among that same people, whispering and persuading them not to ask for Jesus, but for Barabbas. However much the governor has said in testimony of the innocence of the Saviour no reason can find weight with those men, because envy has blinded them. They fear that if Jesus Christ lives all the world will run after Him. This galls them and makes them wish rather for the life of Barabbas. Agitated, then, by this passion, what evil do they not say of Jesus Christ to represent Him as worse than the notorious robber? After having persecuted Him thus far, they might now with honor draw back from their purpose, to do a favor to Pilate, who desires and presses for His liberation; but, being more than ever hardened in their malice, they show themselves openly as inexcusably perfidious.

Cursed envy, which was also the cause of the devil's introducing death into the world, of Cain's murdering his innocent brother Abel, and of the Jews conspiring to put to death the most innocent Lamb of God! And now to look back upon myself, shall I not find this vice holding dominion within me? Alas! who knows? A vice this is difficult to be cured, because it is difficult to know it. But do I not feel, in my interior, some pain or sadness when I see one of my own state in life more beloved or more esteemed, more praised, more honored, or more fortu-

nate than myself? How often do movements of this nature afflict and visibly disturb me through an excess of that self-love which rules within me! And can I doubt that this is real envy, opposed to charity, which ought to make me find comfort in the welfare of my neighbor? But what sorrow have I for this vice in my confessions, and what means do I make use of for its cure?

O my God! who will be able to heal this mortal wound of mine, if Thou dost not do it by pouring out on my heart that precious balsam of charity which flows forth from the source of infinite goodness? It seems to me, O my Jesus! that I have detestation for the envy of the Jews, who hate Thee unto death for the sole reason that Thou art more esteemed and more beloved by the multitudes than they. Why, then, do I not detest also that envy which I entertain against some of my neighbors because I covet for myself all that esteem and good will that is felt for them? Ah, Redeemer of my soul! give me intense hatred and horror of this vice, which is diabolical and directly opposed to the virtue of the Holy Ghost. Give me light to know its deformity, and strength to overcome the sway which I feel it holds within me.

It is an effect of envy to criticise, to blame and misinterpret the doings of our neighbors. Therefore, I shall be on my guard on this point, and I shall endeavor, as much as possible, to judge and speak well of all.

II. There was a law in the Old Testament, that if an innocent man had fallen into the hands of justice others should strive to deliver him; and as the chiefs of the synagogue were principally charged with this, there is no doubt that in the cause of Jesus Christ, when found innocent, they should have been the first to stand up in His behalf. Nevertheless, behold them all conspire against Him. Who is on His side to seek His liberation? No one but Pilate's wife, who being terrified and dejected by some gloomy visions, bears witness, in the face of all, that Jesus is a just man, and warns her husband, with alarming forebodings, to beware of consenting to the iniquity of the

Jews by condemning Him. Oh, what a spectacle! The chosen nations are all enraged against Jesus, and on the side of Jesus are none but Pilate and his wife,—Gentiles.

But let us not be carried away by useless amazement. Is not this what is continually practised in the world? Oh, how few are they who take part with Jesus Christ by upholding justice and promoting what appertains to His glory! Oh, how numerous are the rivals set up against Jesus Christ, who persist in persecuting and offending Him and have not one sentiment of respect for Him! Hence it is that few are saved, many damned. Hence likewise that in order to be saved, we must live as live the few.

But what does this mean, to live as the few live? Few are the humble with that humility which is of the heart,—genuine. Few are they who love God above all things, and their neighbor as themselves. Few who bear adversity with patience. Few who do not allow themselves to be fascinated with vanity, and who do not follow the false maxims of the world. Now, do I live as these few live? Do I possess indeed the humility, the charity, the patience, and the poverty of spirit which is the definition of veritable detachment from the world?

If I seriously reflect on my own state, I am a self-flatterer, and fancy myself possessed of some virtue; but, in truth, I find myself to be wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, entirely destitute of virtue, with scarcely a shadow or reflex of it. My habits are worldly. I live as the many do. I fly abjection, mortification, prayer; and as I can not bring myself to live as the few live, I flatter myself, notwithstanding, with the hope of arriving at that eternal bliss to which no one attains except by the narrow path that is trodden by the few. Ah, my God! divest me of this illusion and cause me to walk in the ways of Thy elect; for, although these ways may be laborious, strengthened by Thee I shall follow them in order to be saved.

To obtain salvation we must follow the Saviour. Few do this; few tread in the footsteps of Jesus Christ by imitating

Him. This is what I also ought to do, this is what I am determined to do. I ask Our Lord to give me His assistance.

III. Though Pilate beholds the mischief done by the priests and the Scribes who were suborned by the people, nevertheless he thinks that the populace will be favorable to Jesus Christ, remembering the benefits that they have received from Him. In order, then, that they may avail themselves of the occasion to set Him free, he proposes Him to them with Barabbas, saying: *Will you that I release to you the king of the Jews?*<sup>1</sup> He calls Him by this name, as if in joke, to make them understand that the accusation brought against Him is false, and that he would not allow a thought to be entertained of His liberation if He had indeed attempted to make Himself a king. But what is the answer given to the governor, who shows it would please him if they should choose Jesus? They all cry out with one voice, *Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.*<sup>2</sup> They all are so infuriated against Him that their words seem, as the Prophets had foretold, rather like the howlings of wild beasts than the voices of men.

How profoundly may we suppose is the noble spirit of the Incarnate Son of God pierced by so grievous an affront, that not one in so immense a crowd should be found who will prefer Him to that monster of iniquity! The more furiously the impious rage against Him the more He is moved toward them with sentiments of the tenderest compassion. He loves all those that hate Him. And what has reduced Him to support this ignominy but the love that He has had for me? Yes; for the very reason that I can not bear to be below certain persons, and would be preferred to all others my competitors, the Sovereign Lord has been pleased to be esteemed below a public malefactor; and as nothing more is expected of me but that I should learn from a God who so greatly humbles Himself not to be proud, but to imitate His humility, how should I not learn to love a virtue of which God has made Himself the Master,

(1) St. Mark xv, 9.      (2) St. Luke xxiii, 18.

for me, by lowering His inestimable greatness under an appearance so astoundingly contemptible?

I now reply by stating a truth which I have already spoken and spoken again more than a thousand times, and which I can not now repeat without blushing and being ashamed of myself because I never reduce it to practice. Most sweet Jesus! most humble Jesus! oh, how true it is, that Thy sacred Passion can not be meditated upon without humility meeting us at every stage! But what avail fine thoughts and discourses on humility if, after all, we are not humble? However, I should be a proud fool if I imagined I could acquire so exalted a virtue by my own endeavors. What can I do without Thy help? Ah, Thou Boon of the salvation of men! remember that Thou art not come simply to teach me humility, but moreover to merit for me the grace which may make me humble in reality. Therefore, I trust in Thy merits to obtain the means and the end that I desire and hope for.

I shall excite within me the desire of humility; and, loving abjection, which has been sanctified in the person of Jesus Christ, I shall beware of preferring myself to any one, esteeming myself unworthy to be considered as the least and last of all.

IV. The Jews will always have two reproaches of conscience:—a malediction on all their Passovers, and in their souls the sentence of perdition for the most grievous crime of having asked for Barabbas to be granted them in preference to Jesus Christ. What strange perversion, what frenzied fury, to rise up against the Author of their existence and to cry for the murderer, the assassin, the criminal deserving of a thousand deaths, to be kept alive! The Prophet, for this excess of wickedness, and in the name of the Saviour, cried out to the heavens, that they should be astonished because His beloved people had abandoned the fountain of living water, and had drunk from wells of their own.

But let us not be too much enraged against the Jews; they are not as guilty as we are. Every sinner has, as it



were, a pair of scales in his hands. On one side he places God, the Sovereign Good, who should be preferred to every other good. On the other, a momentary indulgence, a most foul and shameful gratification. Then having, in the first place, reckoned with himself which it will be the better to choose, God or that miserable pleasure, he forms a deliberate, practical determination to count worthy of more esteem that apparent good than God. There is no exaggeration here.

As the Jews said to Pilate, *Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas*;<sup>1</sup> so, in the act of sinning, a man says as much as the following: *This creature is dearer to me than God. The gratification of this passion is dearer to me than God. The favor of the devil is dearer to me than the favor of God. My body is dearer to me than my soul. Vanity is dearer to me than eternity. An eternity of torments, than an eternity of glory.* Such things can not be reflected upon without horror. It would seem that this preference of every little trifle to God was not compatible with faith; and yet in fact it is compatible, and yet it is done. How often has this been done by me? With whatever care I may examine my conscience, I could not tell the number of times.

I accuse myself, O my God! of my wickedness and detest it with sorrow and repentance. Senseless fool that I have been, to prefer myself to Thee and to think more of gratifying myself than of pleasing Thee! I retract this perversity, and with most humble earnestness calling on Thy mercy, I implore Thee to forgive me. O Jesus! who, though rejected by all, rejectest no one, I beseech Thee to have pity on me. Henceforth I protest, in presence of all the angels and saints of heaven, that I shall always prefer Thee, the Eternal, Omnipotent, Infinite Good, to every other good whatsoever. I am resolved to love Thee. I do love Thee, and I will love Thee above all creatures, and with Thy help it shall never be true that for the sake of anything I would offend Thee. Thou art to me dearer than

(1) St. Luke xxiii, 18.

all the pleasures, all the treasures, and all the honors of the world. I love Thee more than myself. But dominate this unstable will of mine, because it may happen that in a moment, without Thy assistance, I shall love myself more than Thee.

I shall examine what things I love to the prejudice of the love of God. I am not forbidden to love worthy objects, but with the love of preference God alone must be loved.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE JEWS DEMAND THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. PILATE knows not where to limit his wonder, that the Jews are come to so strange a choice as to wish that Barabbas should be set at liberty rather than Jesus Christ. He could never have imagined such a thing. Therefore, in order to force them to be ashamed and to turn from this iniquity, he says, *What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ?*<sup>1</sup> He says this as though he were leaving the matter to their discretion, in order to calm them, and conquer, as it were, by means of courtesy. But they, on the contrary, become only the more savage, and begin to cry out that Jesus should be crucified. O blind minds, and without excuse in their wickedness! Now it is that Jerusalem, according to the saying of the Prophet, has become a den of venomous dragons and of diabolical wild beasts; when, destitute of reason, without piety, after having asked that the malefactor should live, raging and roaring, they insist on the most innocent Saviour's being put to death.

Let us now observe Jesus, who is neither moved to anger against these impious men nor in the least terrified by carrying the cross, nor by death, and that an infamous death. In all this let us consider the benignity of Jesus and the virtues that He is all the while practising, in a degree the most perfect, with the most intense energy of

(1) St. Matt. xxvii, 22.

His Heart. He is exercising fortitude in opposition both to that fear which His most generous soul has of ignominy, and to that other fear that His most sensitive feelings have of death. He opposes patience to the insults that He successively meets; meekness, humility, charity to the rage, the pride, the hatred of His enemies; and He shows us how, in every circumstance in which we may be assaulted by the malice of others, we should always resist and defend ourselves by the heroic practice of the opposite virtues.

O praiseworthy school, which Thou, my divine Master, dost open to me by Thy example! But oh, the untractable, unworthy disciple that I am, to draw no sort of profit from such precious lessons! I am an abyss of the most darksome wickedness, capable of being ingulfed in and habituated to every kind of vice; but totally destitute of aptitude for acquiring those supernatural virtues that are proper for me, and necessary if I would be saved. I see that Thy mercy does not abandon me, because Thou dost not cease to enlighten, to inspire, to assist me. But whence is this that I am yet, after all, full of vices, and during all this time have not arrived at the acquisition of a single virtue?

Ungrateful, malicious, outrageous wretch that thou art, O my soul! Behold the cause of all the mischief. Thou dost not reflect on the Passion, except it be as thou wouldst think of a profane history. Oh! if thou didst think of it as thou shouldst do, with lively faith! Arise, then, implore the merits of thy most sweet Saviour and shake off thy tepidity; dig out the treasure, and be assured thou wilt find that which thou hast not found till now. O my Jesus! to Thee I commend myself through the merits of Thy most sacred Passion.

I shall excite within me the desire to imitate the virtues of Jesus Christ, and I shall conclude that the first virtue to be imitated is His humility, since, without it, it is not possible that I can ever possess solid virtue.

II. The Jews having tumultuously called out that Jesus should be crucified, Pilate pauses for a time to let the

tumult subside. Not able to conceive how the crucifixion of an innocent man should be insisted on with such obstinate cruelty, and not choosing to yield to their clamors against the claims of justice,—moreover being especially moved by the entreaties of his wife, he answers thus with a loud voice, *Why, what evil hath He done?*<sup>1</sup> In saying this, while he declares Him innocent, he intimates also his inclination to let Him go. Then the Jews, with increasing rage, again reply that He should be condemned to the cross. They give no answer to the question whether He has done any evil, because there is no evil discovered to have been done by Him, and they only break out into absurd clamor to gain their end of having Him condemned by dint of violence and blasphemies.

Thus is accomplished what the Saviour had foretold in the Scriptures, and we may form an idea of what is done daily when a mortal sin is committed. An earthly pleasure is placed in competition with God; and the pleasure, being preferred to God, the man cries, if not with his voice, at least by his actions, which is still worse: *Wickedness forever, sin forever! Down with God! Let innocence die, let holiness be crucified!* Meanwhile the sinner's conscience says to him, *What evil hath thy God done to thee?* Is it not He who hath given thee existence, who keeps thee alive, who crowns thee with benefits, and loves thee with more than paternal tenderness? *But be this as it may,* answers the sinner, *rather than I should lose this pleasure, let God lose the life of His glory:* What must the angels say in Paradise at the sight of such daring impiety?

And what ought I to say of myself, having often been the daring, the impious man who has cried down and silenced the remorse of my own conscience to dispute against my God? Thrice have the Jews replied to Pilate, and by their answers made themselves the more guilty. How often, again and again, have I answered my conscience, being obstinately bent on offending God? I should deserve, O most holy Saviour, that for every time that I have cried against

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvii, 23.

Thee, *Crucify Him!*<sup>1</sup> Thou shouldst cry against me on the Day of Judgment and multiply Thy maledictions upon me. But thanks to Thy mercy, which does not abandon me as it abandoned the Jews. I renounce and repent of my sins, and determine for the future always to cry out with firmness: Death to sin! Live grace! Death to sin! Live Jesus!

I shall listen to the importunities of my conscience as graces and mercies of God, and shall determine to crucify my proud self-love with mortification, since it is that which has excited my passions to cry for Jesus to be crucified.

III. Great was the impiety of the Jews to ask that Barabbas should be set free rather than Jesus Christ, as in doing this they counted more precious the life of a robber than that of the Saviour of the world; or rather, they denounced Him as worse than an infamous assassin. But if they had done no more than ask for the liberation of Barabbas, and left it to the judgment of the governor to do what he would with Jesus Christ, they would be less guilty. Their most heinous excess is in their asking for the criminal to be liberated in order that the just One may be condemned; and, in fact, asking in plain terms for the condemnation of this same just Man, while He was shamefully calumniated by them as though He were more wicked than the public malefactor.

Remember who they are that cry out so violently for the crucifixion of Jesus. They are those very men who a short time previously met Him with branches of olive, and loudly proclaimed Him Son of David, King of Israel. It is scarcely six days since they greeted Him with their acclamations. Why, then, are they changed in so short a time so as to insist that He should die an infamous death? What has He done during these six days to deserve this death? He has preached from morning till night. He has been doing good to all, as was always His custom. And for this they cry against Him, *Crucifige!* O world, how inconstant and how treacherous art thou!

(1) St. Mark xv, 14.



But let us return to Jesus. As His spirit has never been puffed up with vanity in the midst of honors, so neither is He cast down amidst ignominies. Whether in prosperity or in adversity, He has His eye fixed on nothing but the glory of His Eternal Father, and He is not in the least moved either by the praises or by the reproaches of the entire world. O striking example for me! This is the doctrine that I must now learn. This is the resolution that I must now form,—neither to do anything with the desire of being praised, nor leave any of my duties undone for fear of being blamed.

Although the whole world should praise me I shall not, on this account, save my soul. Although, again, all the world should blame me, I shall not therefore be damned. My eternity does not depend upon the judgments of men. My soul is in my own hands, and my destiny will depend upon my acting well or ill. O my Jesus, my God! give me strength, I beseech Thee, to follow in practice this virtue of Thine, of making no account of the vain, fallacious judgments of others, but in all my actions to direct my gaze to Thee, since Thou art my Judge, who will, one day, with truth and justice, examine my life. It will avail me nothing, then, that a good opinion has been entertained of me, if I am not good in Thy sight; and it will be no prejudice to me that I should be reckoned a worthless character in the opinion of all, provided before Thee my heart is right and just.

Be it love of praise, be it fear of blame, it emanates from no other source than my pride. The true secret of not caring for what is said of me is to be humble; therefore, I shall ask Jesus for humility.

IV. Pilate persists in his determination not to condemn Jesus Christ, repeating again and again that he sees no reason to condemn Him. The Jews also persist in their determination that, at any cost, He shall be condemned, giving their clamors a more resolute tone, and resolved that malice shall prevail over justice. Excited by the princes, but still more instigated by the devil, they cry out like

madmen. Yet we must believe that the devil himself would rather have endeavored to calm them, had he been able to penetrate the merciful counsel of God.

Let us penetrate it by the light of holy faith. The divine wisdom justly ordered that Jesus Christ should be declared innocent, and, at the same time, condemned to death as guilty, in order that it might be known that He was the Paschal Victim, pure and spotless, destined for the sacrifice, in satisfaction only for the sins of others, not for His own. Justly is Jesus condemned to death instead of Barabbas, and Barabbas set free instead of Jesus; because Jesus truly came to suffer the punishment due to sinners, represented by Barabbas. It is by the condemnation of Jesus that we are made free. O profound mysteries!

Well did Pilate say, O divine Saviour! that he found no cause for Thy death; for how could he, an infidel, find it, hidden as it was beneath Thy eternal decrees? Thou refusest not ignominies; Thou refusest not to die; but Thou wilt that men should understand what is the sublime cause of Thy death, and, at the same time, what is its grand effect. The cause was Thy love, and that most ardent desire which Thou hadst of making satisfaction for our sins. The effect was grace, forgiveness, reconciliation with God. Ah, my Jesus! which shall I admire the more,—the malignity of the Jews against Thee, so cruel; or, Thy charity toward us, so tender?

Withdraw thy thoughts, O my soul! from those inhuman, diabolical monsters, and pause to reflect upon and to ruminate the goodness of the Son of God made Man, and suffering so much for thee, that thou mayest find motives for love of Him. Endeavor to form some conception of His boundless humility; and since for Thy love He abases Himself so far as to be content to pass for a greater sinner and more deserving of death than Barabbas, where wilt thou find a place more suited to thyself if not below all the devils in hell,—they are less wicked than thou? O my God! I fear that that feeling that rises in me as I speak, and which I call affection, is nothing but a delusion of the

understanding. Make me say from my heart that which I now repeat with my mind. Without Thee I know nothing, I can do nothing; I trust in Thee alone.

That cause which Pilate can not find for the death of Jesus Christ, I shall find in my own conscience; and it is my sins. Against these I shall direct my zeal, rather than against the Jews.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

### JESUS CHRIST RESIGNS HIMSELF TO THE WILL OF THE JEWS.

I. WE are come to the last great trial, in which the question is, concerning Jesus Christ, whether He shall be set free as innocent or condemned as guilty. It will turn on this, which of the two shall conquer:—whether Pilate, who would wish to absolve Him; or the people, who would wish Him crucified. Here we must reflect to what an excess of misery the only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father has reduced Himself, His reputation and His life being exposed to extreme peril and no one being found to speak or to act for Him. O pitiable condition! But we must reflect that nothing happens to Him but what has both been ordered by His Eternal Father, and willed by Himself. In proportion as He stands superior to all in the gifts of grace and of knowledge, and in all other most noble qualities, He has also humbled Himself and rendered Himself inferior to all by the ignominies which He endures, as the Prophet had foretold. And this is the eternal decree, that He should stoop to drink of the torrent of humiliations before He should lift up His head to be crowned with glory.

Let us enter deeply into the Heart of this Man-God, to see how He represents His sufferings to His Father. He recommends Himself to Him as a poor abandoned orphan child, surrounded by His enemies filled with rage and hatred. It is in this position that He justly acknowledges Himself as a contemptible little worm, that lies in the

public highway, to be trampled on by every passing foot. Let it not be supposed that it is with Him as with us, who, when oppressed by some heavy calamity, are overwhelmed by our passions and have our reason obscured.

Although so afflicted, Jesus Christ is troubled at nothing, nor do any vapors rise to cloud the serenity of His mind. The pain of sense in Him does not suspend the powers of His soul, nor does sorrow put a check to charity. His sadness does not diminish His fervor, and the clamor of those insulting cries causes in Him not the slightest distraction to prevent His spirit from continuing to act with entire fulness of sanctity and perfection.

Learn, O my soul! so to conduct thyself, that neither tribulation nor affliction nor disaster nor any creature of this world may hinder thee from remaining united with God by the action of the heart. It is by the operation of the interior that all that man does or suffers becomes precious. But what can I do, O my Jesus! of myself; I who, without Thy assistance, am unable to pronounce Thy most holy name? Strengthen my weakness with Thy almighty power. Make me remember Thee, and think of Thee, and direct to Thee my intentions, so that I may love Thee and please Thee in whatever condition I may be placed.

I shall strive to exercise interior acts, in imitation of Jesus Christ, whether in prosperity or in adversity, whether in the duties proper to my state of life or in more indifferent actions.

II. Pilate knows that Jesus Christ is a just Man. He knows moreover that the Jews have maliciously calumniated Him, and that they are now determined barbarously to crucify Him. Therefore, he is, without doubt, inexcusable in his sin while consenting to their unjust demand for the condemnation of the innocent. Nevertheless he calls for water, in the presence of all the people, and washes his hands, to show by that ceremony that his conscience is clear, that he is not guilty of shedding the blood of Jesus Christ, and that they alone must answer for it since by

their clamors they have brought it about. The iniquitous judge knows the sin of the Jews, but he does not know his own, because he does not choose to know it, and he flatters himself with delusive conceit. Though he does not choose to consider himself guilty, it does not follow that he is not indeed guilty.

Let us apply this case by reflecting upon ourselves. How many are there, in every condition of life, like Pilate, who will have it that an act of sin is not sin, precisely because they form ideas about it and frame a conscience for themselves in their own way. But what ground is there for supposing that before the tribunal of God that sin will not be judged as mortal, which we do not choose to consider mortal because of a notion of our own? We ought to fear that God, who has declared that He will judge justice, will judge many injustices by which we justify ourselves, since we are more disposed to favor our concupiscence than our conscience.

I must examine this point; it is an important one, and yet I make little account of it, because I am blinded by self-love. I know the fact is that I very easily make up my mind to accept those opinions that declare things lawful to which I have an inclination, and I take no pains to investigate the truth, contenting myself with a probability which perchance will prove to be only a superficial and an apparent one. I love liberty,—not that of the children of God, but of the children of the world; and I am wont to consider as rigid and exacting many opinions which are grounded on the doctrine of the Gospel according to the views of the Fathers.

I fear, O my Saviour! that Thou wilt judge me in the Valley of Josaphat with the same judgment that will be passed on Pilate. Thou hast said of Thyself that Thou art the Truth, and it is the truth that I ought to seek as far as possibly lies in me. And since this truth is easily discovered because of Thy promise that Thou wilt impart Thy lights to those who shall pray to Thee for the knowledge of the truth, how shall I be able to justify myself for not



having known the truth, whereas I have never prayed to Thee for light to know it? I pray to Thee now, O my God! Suffer me not to go astray in the conduct of my life. Give me a spirit that will cause me always to love and desire and seek the truth, so that I may not be deceived into forming for myself a false conscience founded on false rules.

In doubts of conscience I shall be careful not to rely on certain lax opinions. In my confessions I shall beware of passing over as a trifle what in reality may be a grievous fault.

III. We must look upon the Jews as worse than Pilate, because if they had not known Jesus Christ as the true God they might, however, and they ought to have known Him as such by His miracles, His doctrine, and the sayings of the Prophets. Their not choosing to know Him, on account of the envy and hatred that they entertained for Him, is an affected ignorance which rather makes them more guilty and more inexcusable. They had often heard and admired and acknowledged Him as a Saint; and yet, now that they have all together shouted out that they would have Him crucified, they pretend that by this sacrilegious determination they have been guilty not even of a venial sin. Pilate having charged their consciences with the unjust shedding of this innocent blood,—yes, they answer, we are satisfied that the punishment should fall upon us and upon our children.

O malice, how blind thou art! A little while ago thou didst bless Him in the name of God, and now thou dost cry against Him that He should be crucified. Thou didst scruple to enter the Praetorium for fear of defilement, and now thou hast no scruple to attempt the life of the Just. They think that there is not the slightest sin in all this; but they deceive themselves, and in deceiving themselves they commit sin, because their malice has blinded them.

The same is applicable to me. I believe and confess that God is most worthy to be loved and obeyed, and yet I offend Him! That God whom I offend by my sins is the

same God that I adore in the tabernacles of churches, and in His universal immensity. And what shall we say of this—at one moment to honor this God by so many acts of religion, at another to outrage Him by so many shameful deeds! O my God! in what clear light does my faith place my wickedness! On the other hand, how blind and senseless does my wickedness render me! The saints, in examining their conscience, discover stains of every species of fault and imperfection, while I pass over, as almost nothing, certain sins which, in so many minds, would cause horror. The Jews maintained that it was no sin to crucify Thee, because they judged Thee deserving of death; but I know Thee to be deserving of honor and immortal glory. Notwithstanding this knowledge, I crucify Thee and reckon this decide to be a trifling affair.

Ah! is there on earth a reprobate worse than I? There is no worse; but yet I trust Thy mercy, O my Saviour! Thou most ardent Lover of the salvation of men! I implore Thee to cleanse me from those secret sins which I know not through a judicial blindness which I have merited for myself. Enlighten my conscience, I beseech Thee. Look not on my iniquities with the rigor of justice, to punish them, but with an eye of pity in order to forgive them, and grant me Thy love.

IV. Pilate hears the imprecations of the Jews, who call down upon themselves and on all their descendants the revenge of this innocent blood. An imprecation truly cruel and horrible! Astounded at it, he immediately sets free the seditious Barabbas whom they had asked for as a favor, and at the same time gives up to their pleasure Jesus Christ, that they may do with Him as they wish. What else do they wish but that He should be put to death on the cross? The Evangelist says that he gave Him up as a prey to their will. Could He have been given up to a more unjust and more impious judge?

This, however, is what we also do whenever we sin. We, all of us, have a will, which is called the will of the flesh, our own will; that is, the will of our self-love, which follows

the corrupt instinct of the passions and is diametrically opposed to and resists God. So that when God forbids anything, and this will chooses it in spite of God, it claims to have the right to set itself up against God and to gain the victory over God. So depraved and fierce is it that it endeavors, as far as lies in its power, to put God to death by desiring, if it could, that God should be no longer God. To this self-will Jesus Christ is given up the moment that we commit mortal sin, and what does it desire but that He should be crucified anew? O wicked will! Treacherous will! But while I say this I am talking to the air. I ought properly to say of this will that it is my own.

O my Jesus! I have within me a whole nation of passions that continually urge me to sin in one way or another; they shout against Thee incessantly, *Crucifige! Crucifige!* How often have I given Thee over as a prey to the wicked will of these people! At every moment I feel this sinful will opposing Thy love, and driving me with vehemence to the love of vanity. When shall it be that I will resolve indeed to check the pride of my self-love, which is the cause and the source of every evil within me; to attach myself solely to Thy will, which is the source of all my good?

O my soul! in thought descend into hell and behold that there below the divine justice punishes nothing but self-will. Self-will alone is burnt in that eternal fire. Therefore, if self-will did not exist, neither would there be a hell. Reflect well. If thy self-will chooses now to crucify Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ will likewise crucify this same self-will of thine in eternity. What then?—Make me, O my Jesus! love Thy infinite goodness, and fear Thy infinite justice.

The mortification of my own will shall be the constant exercise of my life. I shall moreover mortify it in things lawful, to accustom myself to mortify it greatly and with more effect in unlawful things.

V. On the one hand, the Jews should never have so cruelly demanded that Jesus should be crucified; nor, on the other, should Pilate so unjustly have permitted it. The

sight alone of that innocent Lamb undergoing such calumnies, such outrages, and such torments in silence, without a word to justify Himself and without a word of resentment, with patience and meekness, is manifestly superhuman. Is not this sufficient to make us draw back from so iniquitous a judgment? When Jesus answered the questions proposed to Him, we can understand from His prudent words that He was a wise Man. Again, when He remained silent, proving Himself superior to injuries, we can see that there was in Him more virtue than appertains to a man. Whether in His words or in His silence, there is matter only for admiration. Yet no one derived profit from anything.

O judgments of Heaven, profound abyss! The Jews have said and done so much that at last they have prevailed. Although they had previously heard the divine Master preach that respect must be paid to justice, they recollect nothing. They insist that the Just One should be condemned contrary to all reasons of justice. And the just Jesus, in so great distress, what says He? What does He think? Beholding verified the Prophetic oracle,—that iniquity would prevail in judgment,—He adores, with most profound submission, the justice of His heavenly Father, and remains silent, without being in the least discomposed at the injustice of men.

And what sayest thou, what thinkest thou, O my soul! on seeing thy Lord proclaimed as worse than a public malefactor and judged worthy to be put to death on the cross, the worst of all punishments? I am thinking, O Lord! that Thou who now art judged so unjustly wilt one day come to judge all the world with justice and equity. In this will this equity consist: that, without acceptance of persons, Thou shalt give to each either eternal glory according to his good works, or eternal punishment according to his evil deeds. And what, then, will be the case with me, who have so frequently cried out with the Jews against Thee, *Crucifige!*

This is what I am thinking, and while I think thus, I humble myself and exclaim: Mercy, O my God! Mercy,

O my God! since Thy mercy alone can assist me. I ought never to have offended Thee, especially on account of so many mercies which Thou hast deigned to grant me. But having offended Thee, ought I, in consequence, to despair? I believe the loving kindness of my Redeemer to be unspeakably greater than the wickedness of me a sinner; therefore I repent and I am grieved for my iniquities. O my God, I hope and confide in Thy infinite goodness!

I shall beg Jesus Christ to assist me by His grace, that I may not become insensible to His mercies like the Jews. If I do not profit by the examples offered me in His holy Passion, I shall in reality be like them.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### JESUS CHRIST CONDEMNED TO BE SCOURGED.

I. PILATE yields to the solicitations of the Jews, by delivering Jesus Christ into their hands to do what they will with Him. However, as he sees the wrong that is about to be inflicted on the innocent Victim, he has recourse to another expedient, and he decrees that Jesus shall be scourged, thus hoping that the people may be satisfied and appeased and finally persuaded to abandon their cruel purpose. It was the custom that those who were condemned to the cross should be scourged. But in this case it seems that the judge had a kind intention toward Jesus Christ, and scourged Him in order to satisfy His enemies and save Him from death.

Nevertheless, O unjust sentence! O barbarous sentence! If thou knowest, Pilate, that this Man has done no evil, how canst thou conclude that He deserves the punishment of scourging, which is inflicted on malefactors only? Is there justice in punishing one who is pronounced innocent? This is making thyself guilty of that depravity which a short time ago thou didst deprecate in the Jews. But let us not waste time in reproaches against the governor in-



stead, rather, of learning a lesson ourselves. He conceives that the people would be tranquillized by giving them this satisfaction; but he deceives himself, because, having been so far gratified as to have Him scourged, they perfidiously insisted likewise on His being crucified. This is what also happens to us.

The more we seek to gratify our passions, the more arrogant and insolent they become. Curiosity increases in proportion as we gratify our eyes; gluttony increases by gratifying the appetite; the cravings of lust, anger, sloth, and of every other vice, by little and little grow stronger in proportion as we satisfy them; and by not scrupling to commit venial sins, wickedness grows, and we come to mortal sins.

Oh, that in the past I had made profitable reflections on this subject! Hence arises all the evil within me. As Pilate was at first far, very far, from crucifying Jesus Christ, and yielded thereto by degrees in condescending to the wishes of the people, so have I also often arrived at crucifying Jesus Christ by my sins because I have been easily drawn into gratifying the rabble of my passions and senses.

O my God! for the past there is no other remedy than humbling myself and deploring my transgressions, but for the time to come I must surely be more guarded. My appetites must be mortified, not pampered. For this I implore Thee to fortify me in my weakness and to encourage me in my pusillanimity. Thou, my Jesus, dost not deserve to be offended in the least point. I promise, with Thy assistance, to refrain from ever again offending Thee;—yes, from every offence, even venial, lest I fall by degrees into mortal, and perhaps likewise into final impenitence.

I shall thoroughly learn how immense is the danger of giving a loose rein to my passions, or granting them any satisfaction. Moreover, I shall determine to resist their movements in their commencement.

II. Scarcely had Pilate given orders for the scourging of Jesus Christ, when they began immediately to prepare

for the execution of them. The officers surround Him and drag Him furiously into the court, to the place in which assassins and other infamous criminals are tied in order to be publicly flogged. Oh, how the Jews exult over this evidence that Pilate gives of having Him convicted as a criminal deserving of death by condemning Him to this punishment, which it is not the custom to inflict except on the most barbarous culprits. And, oh! what is the joy also of Jesus Christ at beholding the dawn of that morning and that hour announced by the Prophets, and foretold and so ardently desired by Himself, when He should shed His blood under the scourges for the salvation of the world! The apprehension that caused sadness to Him in the garden now causes Him joy, because His time has come in which He has to pay the price of our Redemption.

Behold, O my soul! thy Saviour with tranquillity humbling Himself before the Majesty of the Eternal Father, declaring Himself perfectly ready to submit to a torture so painful and so ignominious. See how He suffers Himself to be led by the executioners, with so much shame to Himself, whither they choose; most meek, most obedient, without giving the least sign, under His afflictions, of either resistance or impatience. Being the Son of man, in becoming Man, He had already assumed the form of a servant that He might be subject to all. Now He takes the form of a wicked servant who deserves to be beaten. The form, not of servant of the servants of God, but of servant of the servants of the devil,—that is, of His executioners.

O my Jesus! who could fathom Thy Heart to see that loving thirst which Thou hast to suffer and to satisfy for me! But, without seeing it, I believe it to be most ardent, and I render Thee thanks for it, if not as I ought, at least as well as I can, with all the strength of my poor soul. Let Thy dignity and most ardent charity supply the want of what I owe Thee. Permit me to offer one petition prompted by the desire that I have to imitate Thee: As Thou hast accepted with such good will the sentence of scourging in satisfaction to the divine justice for my sins,

so give me also the grace that I may accept with a willing heart those scourges of temporal adversity with which Thy mercy shall deign to afflict me. All is but little in comparison with the pains that I deserve, and yet I can not endure a misfortune, however trifling, without yielding to vexation and impatience. Grant, O my God! that the scourges of Thy tender hand—poverty, infirmity, dishonor, tribulations,—may serve to humble and convert me, and not, through my faults and obstinate hardness, to damn me. Thou dost treat me as a father when Thou chastisest me, and I should correspond to all Thy paternal chastisements with filial love.

I shall learn that in tribulations we may be afflicted and yet resigned, after the example of Jesus Christ, in whom affliction is no hindrance to resignation. Let sense groan, but the spirit be united with God.

III. Jesus Christ is no sooner come into the great court, where He is to be scourged, than the executioners hasten to set Him loose from His bonds and strip Him of His clothes, leaving Him naked. O what joy, what outburst of laughter among that insolent rabble as they look at Him! And oh, how is the face of the blessed Saviour suffused with painful blushes through shame! He is that God who covers the air with clouds and the exalted heavens with glory; who clothes the earth with herbs and the flowers with their charming mantle. Now, behold His most beautiful body publicly stripped naked. In His soul He is clothed with grace, strength, and holiness. In His body He is clothed only with confusion, from the exceeding ignominy and shame cast upon His modesty and virginal purity, exposed as it is to the gaze of all.

Why is it that He, who afterward clothed with light so many holy virgins whom tyrants have made martyrs by the torment of nakedness, does not now protect Himself? We must answer, that the shame of nakedness being a punishment entailed on the sin of Adam, He suffers it in order to ward off that horrible shame that threatens sinners when, on the Day of Judgment, their iniquities shall be laid bare

before all the world. He endures the nakedness of His body to cover the shameful nakedness of our souls with garments of virtue and of grace.

O good Jesus! how much more than all others am I bound to thank Thee for Thy generous love toward me, and to sympathize with Thee in that confusion and amid those blushes that Thou endurest for me! To me, to me, is justly due confusion and punishment for my sins; not to Thee, who sufferest it solely out of love and as a propitiation. But what shall become of me if I do not reap benefit from Thy merits? I foresee that my shame will be horrible at the Last Judgment, when my guilty conscience shall be laid bare and my wickedness shall appear wholly naked in the presence of all the saints and angels, who will cast upon me their reproaches. Ah, my Jesus! by that shame which was so humiliating to Thee give me a holy shame that may truly humble me at the remembrance of my sins. How many reasons have I now to be ashamed and to humble myself at the recollection of so many enormities committed by me in thoughts, words, and works! If I endeavored to make a numerical calculation of my sins, oh, what an amount would it be,—destined to cause me not only shame but terror!

Shame for having sinned is beneficial as a remedy for the past; but, as a preventive for the time to come, I shall form a conception of how shameful sin is in itself, and I shall be ashamed of sin in order not to commit it.

IV. The Jews, after making game of Jesus Christ, with fits of laughter at seeing Him naked, now burst out with rage and vomit abuse upon Him for the simple reason, as the Prophet says, that they behold Him so willingly disposed to submit to the scourge. Nevertheless, fearful of His escaping through some power of magic or something of the sort, they mix with the Gentiles and bind Him fast to the pillar, the usual place for the punishment of culprits. This is the third time that He is bound, the cords having already been multiplied about Him:—first in the garden, then before Caiphas. It is of His own free will that He,



overcome with bashfulness, allows Himself to be bound, putting forth and offering those sacred hands which, by a simple touch, have enlightened the blind and raised the dead to life.

But who has been so bold, after having dared to strip Him, now also to bind Him? Let us adore the dispensations of divine mercy, and say, that no one has been able to do Him any violence except so far as He Himself has been pleased. To speak correctly, it is the Eternal Father, who by the force of an immense charity, binds Him and constrains Him to hold in His hands more firmly that chalice of the Passion which was presented to Him in the garden. It is His Eternal Father, who knowing that His Son had compared Himself to a vine, now, like a husbandman, ties Him to the pillar, as the vine is commonly tied to the stake, in order to bear fruit in more abundance. It is Jesus Christ who suffers Himself to be thus bound without fault, to pay the penalty for us, not heeding the dishonor of His bonds, except for the reason alone that He appears to undergo the scourging through necessity, whereas He undergoes it for love. Here is what I must fix my thoughts upon throughout the Passion:—Jesus suffers nothing by necessity; all through love!

Most sweet Jesus! who art come into the world to free from the fetters of sin all the sons of Adam, now at the pillar Thou dost prepare to pay the price of our ransom. But how can I rejoice over my liberty, when I behold Thee bound and about to be beaten like the meanest slave? O dear Son of God! how good art Thou, since Thou art pleased that I should thank Thee, and love Thee, and should moreover take comfort from all the good I gain! This I ought to do, and I have diligently performed it. With my whole heart I thank Thee, and I shall thank Thee. With my whole heart I love Thee and I shall love Thee constantly and above and beyond all things,—only grant me Thy help; I mean, one of those efficacious helps that Thou hast merited for me in Thy Passion, to the end that I may



worthily thank Thee and love Thee in this life and in the next, for all ages, world without end. Amen.

Let the fruit be, to coöperate with the grace that Jesus Christ has merited for me by His bonds, by striving to free myself from the bonds of sin by penance, from the bonds of evil habits by doing violence to myself and mortifying myself.

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

### JESUS CHRIST SCOURGED AT THE PILLAR.

I. ENTERING now upon the contemplation of the scourging of Jesus Christ, the first suffering unto blood with which His enemies torment Him in His Passion, it is well to remark, in the first place, that the Evangelists do not mention it, except barely to advert to it in a word or two at most. They were perhaps restrained by horror, or by the bare impossibility of doing justice to the subject; or probably, we may again say, they only speak of it in passing, leaving to us concerning this mystery only the seed of the truth, in order that afterward we may cause it to germinate in our hearts by pious meditations. They do not, however, conceal it beneath the veil of secrecy,—the Holy Spirit ordering that this painful disgrace, which to us is full of sublime glory, should in this manner be made known to us.

In fact, most injurious to Jesus Christ is this punishment, which formerly was never inflicted upon respectable persons, but was altogether reserved for the punishment either of most rebellious slaves, or of robbers and most wicked malefactors. Nevertheless He suffers it with an intrepidity, a constancy, and a calmness of mind beyond words to express. It is no confusion to Him to undergo confusion. He suffers Himself to be flogged by these ministers of injustice, and to the last degree to be dishonored by blows, and He behaves under the scourges in such a way as though it were not Himself who received the strokes, but some one else.

From what motive does He receive encouragement in His suffering? It is for our welfare. He endures the punishment of a slave to redeem slaves. He suffers the reproach of scourging to deliver us from the reproach of eternal damnation which, by the divine decree, would be our lot. He takes upon Him our evils to impart to us His goods, and bears the punishment of our sins, as though they were His own, in order that we may enjoy the honor and the merit of grace, justice, and holiness, which are all His own.

What an abasement for a God, who, after clothing Himself with human flesh, should allow His deified limbs to be so cruelly scourged! What an honor for me, that a God so loves me as to submit to be scourged for me! Oh, how am I bound to make a return of love to that God for the great, the exceeding great, account He has made of me, His most vile creature! And, likewise, if every dishonor that I endure for Him is honor to Him, how comes it that there is so much opposition and so much aversion to everything that has but the semblance of dishonor, though perhaps it is a dishonor only in my own imagination? This is all on account of my insuperable pride. Consequently do I not deserve, O my God! that Thou shouldst humble me by force, sending me also in this world dishonor of every kind, since I will not humble myself for love? Yes, I deserve to be scourged with respect to my pride; and because I desire to please Thee, O Lord, I pray Thee, give me holy humility. Humiliations suffered against my will may make me a reprobate, and I am aware that true humility can not fail to make me a saint.

I shall give glory to Jesus Christ for the ignominy that He suffers under the scourges; and I shall resolve to imitate Him by suffering, at least, the scourge of those tribulations that it shall please the Lord to send me.

II. Extremely disgraceful is the scourging of Jesus Christ. It is a spectacle horrible to Heaven and earth, and moreover so painful as to surpass our conception. But, at least to comprehend the excessive pain attached to it, we must first understand that the Person who is scourged is

the true Son of God, miraculously formed, as to His body, with most tender flesh and most delicate constitution, and made thus on purpose that He might be able to feel every degree of most intense pain. Therefore, He felt more acutely a slight puncture than we would feel being thrust through with a sword. Consequently, His pain must have been so much the more poignant as His nature was more sensitive.

Having, in the first place, pondered all this well, O my soul! behold in what manner those merciless tormentors, with savage, unheard-of cruelty, discharge their blows on that virginal, spotless and deified flesh. One blow follows another on the shoulder, the breast, on every part of that most sacred body. That man must have a heart of stone who does not compassionate the suffering Jesus in His painful ignominies and His ignominious pains. Why, then, is it that I do not feel my heart in the least touched, when I should, nevertheless, experience some sensible displeasure at beholding so barbarous a scourging?

Ah, my God! I know whence proceeds this dryness. It is because I do not think of that which I ought always to keep before the eyes of my mind:—that Thou dost suffer Thyself to be scourged for me and for my sins. Now, however, I believe with an act of faith, that for grief over my sins Thy most sweet Heart was broken in the garden; so, in like manner, for these same sins of mine was Thy most sacred body maltreated at the pillar. The least that I can do is to curse and to detest all my sins, and to bless and to thank Thy love. My sins are mine, on account of their guilt; Thou hast made them Thine by Thy sufferings, as I behold Thee, before my eyes, receiving on Thyself—the Holy, the Undeified, the Innocent,—those savage blows that are due to me a sinner. O love, love of God, to what excess hast thou gone for me! And shall I persist in being, notwithstanding, hard and ungrateful? Ah, my most loving Jesus, most worthy to be loved! make me love Thee with a love sincere and strong, prepared to accept and suffer every scourge of adversity and tribulation for Thee. We can not

love Thee without imitating Thee. I desire to be Thy imitator, to make myself worthy of Thy love.

I shall resolve to endure some inconvenience or displeasure for the love of Jesus Christ. I shall make a virtue of necessity, and I shall give to my virtue its true value by exalting it to a supernatural degree by means of holy love.

III. Those barbarous men surround Jesus Christ, like so many wasps longing to draw His blood. The blood is already prepared under the skin; since through the shame of His nakedness, which surpassed what any man on earth ever suffered, it has risen not only to His face, but it is spread between the flesh and the skin so as to make the whole of His body blush. His most tender skin then breaking at the first strokes, it issues forth in streamlets from every part, so that the sacred blood covers the scourges and the pillar,—nay, covers and bedews the earth.

Now we may say that the prophecy is fulfilled,—that the body of Jesus Christ is like a purse, and the blood which runs through His veins like precious coin, which is to serve as the price for the Redemption of the world. When that all-holy Humanity is rent open by dint of blows, the price of the blood issues forth to satisfy for us. Behold how precious is my soul, since it cost nothing less than the invaluable blood of a God! And yet, this soul valued at so high a rate by the wisdom of God, at what value do I prize it practically myself?

O blind, mad being that I am! Every time that I sin I sell my soul to the devil for a vain thing, for a nothing. Thus have I sold it many times for momentary, base pleasures; but, while I see the Word of God made Man pouring out and spending with immense pain His own blood to redeem it, what value ought I, too, to learn to put upon it! Ah, if my soul were of small account, would the Son of God have come of His own accord to suffer for it what He suffers?

O my God! I am terrified at the thought that a day will come when I shall have to render Thee an account of every drop of blood which Thou hast shed for me. Alas! what

shall I say when I shall see, on that day, both how much has been done by Thee to save me and how much I have done to damn myself? I shall then know the excess of Thy mercy and the depth of my wickedness. But what shall it avail me then to know this, except to cast me into despair?

Ah, most gentle Saviour! give me light to know the truth now to my profit, that I may jealously watch over and safeguard my soul as a treasure of infinite value which is worth as much as Thy divine blood. I ought to give Thee blood for blood; but, knowing as I do, that although I should give Thee the whole of this my blood that circulates in my body, I should give Thee but a vile refuse, I will give Thee instead, and I now give and make over to Thee, my soul;—no longer mine, but Thine, because it was purchased by Thee with Thy blood. Moreover, I promise to care for it, that I may never again stain it with sin.

I shall repent of the small account that in times past I have made of my soul, principally for this reason,—that by making small account of my soul, I have made small account of the blood of Jesus Christ.

IV. Jesus is covered with His blood. With His blood scattered abroad through the air are His torturers sprinkled on their clothes, arms and face. Yet, at the sight of *so much* blood, those impious men are nowise moved to pity. Nay, rather, as though becoming more savage and barbarous, they prolong this storm of stripes upon Him, mutilating His blessed flesh, multiplying stroke upon stroke, wound upon wound, pain upon pain. His back and breast being mangled at every point, all His ribs may be seen, and well-nigh all His bones may be counted. Who in all that multitude is there that looks on Jesus with an eye of compassion? Not one.

For that poor man who is described in the Gospel as fallen into the hands of robbers and grievously wounded on the road to Jericho, there was found a Samaritan who took pity on him. He gave him remedies and bound up his wounds. But for Jesus Christ, who is moved to pity? Where art thou, O Mary, and the other Marys? The



Prophet had foretold that no one would bring balm nor binding to heal the wounds of the Saviour. And how bitter were His pains? One of us, who strikes himself with a discipline, feels indeed the first blows; but the pain subsides by degrees, because his flesh grows either callous or benumbed, and the pain of sense is lost. But with Jesus Christ this is not the case. His flesh was made for this purpose, to feel and smart under every slight injury; hence He feels and suffers the torture of every stroke, without any alleviation of the pain, from His sense being more acute and always impressionable. He suffers because He chooses to suffer. In Him it is His will that gives to nature the power to feel and to suffer every degree of most intense pain.

O good Jesus, who art the Saint of saints! why hast Thou chosen to expose Thyself to the painful endurance of so many wounds? In these wounds I read Thy love; and, by the light of my faith, I see that Thou hast permitted Thyself to be thus covered with wounds only to heal the wounds of my soul. My wounds pain Thee more than Thy own. I am the wretch who, worse than these tormentors, has added wound upon wound on Thy body by adding sin to sin in myself. The scourging that tortured Thee at the pillar lasted but a short time; but for years and years has my wickedness gone on cruelly scourging Thee, while multiplying iniquities beyond all bounds.

O most merciful Jesus! I throw myself at Thy feet to implore Thy mercy, since I have nothing in which to find comfort but in this. That mercy that causes Thee to bear the injustice and the fury of all these strokes with so much love for me, let this also move Thee to pardon me and to bear with me and to give me the grace to employ the remainder of my life in penance.

In imitation of Jesus Christ, who suffers more for my sins than from His own wounds, I also shall grieve more for these sins than for any evil whatsoever. There is no evil that can be denominated real evil in comparison with sin.

V. It is understood from approved revelations that the strokes received by Jesus Christ in His scourging amounted to thousands. However, the truth is best expressed by saying that these strokes, as they were without pity, were also without number. There was a law that culprits should be more or less scourged according to the quality of their crimes; still, that the strokes should not exceed forty. But for Jesus Christ there was neither law nor rule nor measure nor order; consequently, there was no limit to the number. Purposing to satisfy for all by bearing the punishments due to all, which are likewise without number, how should it not be reasonably believed that, accordingly, the strokes inflicted upon Him in the scourging were without number? And that in proportion to what the sinner deserves, the Redeemer was scourged?

There would have been sufficient to redeem the whole human race in His enduring one single stroke, in the opening of one solitary wound, or the shedding of one drop alone of His blood, by virtue of the Divinity which was united to His Humanity; but what was enough to satisfy divine justice did not suffice to satisfy His love. Had human nature been capable of suffering more He would have suffered more, and willingly, from the consideration that He was not suffering for Himself, but for us. As the strokes are discharged on Him one after another, making wound upon wound, He exhibits to us at the same time the visible signs of His charity; and why, except to force us to love Him in return, since the obtaining of our eternal salvation depends on our love for Him?

O Jesus, pierced through at one and the same time with love and pain! For thy love I thank Thee, and for Thy pain I compassionate Thee. I know the object of Thy love: it is my soul, which Thou hast loved from all eternity. The subject of Thy pain I also know: it is not so much the scourges of the executioners, but far more the sins of the world, and mine especially, which are heaped and multiplied upon Thy back.

Oh, Thy goodness must be great, exceeding great, to love

this vile soul of mine on which Thou shouldst not deign to cast one look! Oh, and my wickedness too must be great, exceeding great, for me not only not to love Thee, but to offend Thee, and to add sin to sin incessantly!

O most loving Jesus! by that multitude of wounds upon wounds on Thee, which could not be numbered one by one, wound my heart with Thy love, so that from the wound of love may gush forth tears of sorrow and repentance. It is impossible for me to grieve as I should for having offended Thee, if I do not love Thee. I ask Thee for Thy love, so that I may have that sorrow which is necessary in order that Thou mayest be my Saviour efficaciously.

I shall produce acts of love to Jesus Christ, and make acts of sorrow for my sins. I shall not grow weary of them, for if in other virtues there should be some rule and measure, with regard to love and contrition we can never do too much.

VI. To understand how barbarous was the scourging of Jesus Christ, we must furthermore reflect that not only the ministers of Pilate, but likewise the Jews themselves, take in their hands the scourges to torment Him, becoming His executioners after having been His accusers and His judges. Therefore, being at the height of their fury against Him, filled with diabolical rage and paid by the rulers to make them treat Him with the utmost cruelty, we can not doubt that they applied the whole force of their arms to give weight to their blows. The perfidious wretches fear lest Pilate should let Him go free after the scourging, as he has already said he would. Having Him, then, in their hands, with liberty to scourge Him as much as they wish, it is most probable that, providing themselves with various kinds of scourges, they crowd around Him, contending who shall tear and mangle Him the most, so that they may have the satisfaction to see Him die.

It is a conflict between cruelty and patience. The Jews, on the one side, have an insatiable thirst for the death of Jesus Christ, and multiply their strokes to the utmost of their strength to make Him die as soon as possible. Jesus

Christ again, on His side, has an ardent thirst to accomplish by His death the Redemption of the world; but, as He is resolved to die upon the cross, He works a miracle at every stroke in order to keep Himself alive. The cruelty which strikes is at length exhausted, while the patience which endures the strokes is untiring. Are we not forced by our reason to acknowledge Him as God by His patience alone? He hides His Divinity under His wounds and ignominies that He may appear in the form only of a man, the most contemptible and abject; but not giving any sign of impatience by which He may be known as Man, He declares Himself God by His unconquerable patience. For who but a Man-God could intrepidly stand beneath a storm of blows so numerous and so furious?

O patience of God! O God of patience! how ought I to blush when I reflect on this virtue of patience so loved and practised by Thee, so hated and shunned by me! What confusion for me to behold Thee employing Thy omnipotence to work miracles in order to suffer, and then to reflect on myself, who bestow all my care only on seeking pleasures and conveniences for my body? How can the enjoyments of the world be a gain for me, when I know that Thou art fainting beneath the scourges?

O my God! who being in Thy own nature impassible, hast made Thyself Man on purpose to become subject to suffering, impart to me the spirit of patience, and courage to practise it meritoriously for Thy love. Let this be the fruit that I shall draw from meditating on Thy sacred Passion; that I may have patience to suffer something daily for Thee, as Thou hast had patience to suffer such pains for me.

I shall make particular resolutions to mortify myself with some inconvenience or corporal penance, in imitation of Jesus Christ; and I shall do violence to myself in order to overcome the bad habit I have of rebellious aversion to suffering.

VII. It was necessary that the Saviour of the world should be scourged in order that the prophecies of Scrip-

ture might be fulfilled. If it be also written that no scourge shall dare come nigh to the tabernacle of His Humanity, this must be understood that no one should be able to make Him suffer by constraint, nor inflict one blow upon Him if He did not give His own free and spontaneous permission.

This being explained, lift up thy eyes, O my soul! and behold how the Eternal Father speaks to Thee from on high and declares that He it is that punished His Son with so cruel a scourging, the executioners being only the instruments and ministers of His sovereign justice. Let us inquire the reason why so great severity was used toward the adorable person of His only-begotten Son. He will answer, by the Prophet, that it is all on account of the extreme hatred which He bears to sin. Let us also draw near to Jesus Christ, and say to Him: Dear Son of God! what evil hast Thou done to merit a punishment so excruciating and so shameful? Our own conscience will answer us at once that He is innocent. It is we that have sinned. Therefore, for us He takes upon Himself so severe a punishment, to make us learn from what He suffers that the exceeding great evil of sin is beyond comprehension.

O sin, how great an evil it is, since for it the Incarnate Son of God does penance so rigorous! Is it possible to contemplate that most sacred flesh mangled with scourges, covered with wounds, and not exclaim with feelings of horror: O what an evil, O what an immense evil is sin! Again, is it possible to learn the nature of this evil, from the scourging of Jesus Christ, and not be moved to do penance for it with Him and after His example? Hearken, O my soul! to the voice of thy Lord, who speaks to thee from the pillar, as He formerly spoke to the people of Israel from the pillar of the cloud, and who preaches penance to Thee with as many mouths as He has wounds on His body.

O my Jesus! I hear Thee, but at the very name of penance nature is alarmed and sense revolts. Ah, teach me, I beseech Thee, to know the necessity I have of this virtue, in order to coöperate with Thy Passion and to make myself



worthy of the remission of my sins. Give me courage, give me strength. I had courage to be a sinner, I have not courage to be a penitent. I pray Thee by all those scourges steeped in Thy blood, which I kiss and adore; I implore Thee by that generous charity, with which Thou didst endure them; instil into me an ardent love for suffering, so that as I have employed my soul and my body in sin, I may also employ my soul and my body in penance, thus to offer the best satisfaction I can to Thy injured Majesty.

VIII. Although Jesus Christ was pleased to suffer for the sins of every description that we have committed, we must yet say that He was thus torn by scourges in His flesh especially to purge away uncleanness of the flesh. In chastisement for the sins of the flesh God had already sent two deluges,—one of water, another of fire; now, behold in what manner He also sends a deluge of blows on the back of His most innocent Son solely because He sees Him clothed with flesh like ours, which is infected and corrupted by sin! Therefore, can we consider sins of the flesh as a light evil?

Let us seriously weigh this point. How must the angels be astonished to see the Incarnate Word doing such horrible penance in His immaculate flesh for the foul sins committed by us in our flesh? How much more astonished ought we to be to know that a God is so scourged and mangled in His human nature for our carnal sins? Although not God, but only the flesh united with God, suffers, the pain of the flesh still redounds on God Himself. How great an evil, then, must be the sin of impurity, since it is punished with so great severity in the most pure flesh of a God? How deadly must be the wounds of sense, since there is no balsam to heal them but the blood issuing from the wounds of a Man-God?

O Eternal Father! I behold the grievousness of my sins in the scourging of Thy dear Son. What can I offer Thee in satisfaction but the wounds and the blood of this same Son? For the iniquities of my sinful flesh I present to Thee the merits of His most holy flesh. If my insolent

flesh has provoked Thy wrath, let the humbled flesh of Jesus appease Thee and incline Thee to have mercy on me.

O Jesus, Lover of chastity, ardent Lover of chaste souls! I repent for having thus mangled Thee by my impurities. I implore of Thee the grace of pardon for the past and help for the future, that I may never more offend Thee. Remove from me the occasions of sin, strengthen me to conquer temptations and my disorderly passions. Extinguish in me the desires of the flesh, and grant me that holy spirit by which I may be restrained from ever again offending against chastity, but, on the contrary, may love and guard it with all possible jealousy. And since I can neither separate myself from my body, nor my body from myself, as I am obliged to nourish it; and, since the more I nourish it, the more rebellious it becomes, I recommend to Thee all my senses, interior and exterior, that Thou mayest safeguard them by Thy power and that I may be preserved from danger for Thy glory.

In order to guard my chastity I shall resolve to observe modesty, especially of my eyes, through which may enter pleasing images calculated to awaken impure desires.

IX. After having several times relieved one another, these executioners at last break down from fatigue, so that they unloose Jesus Christ from the pillar, and He, totally deprived of strength, scourged from head to foot, through extremity of weakness falls into the pool of His own blood that surrounds Him. Whom would He not move to compassion in this wretched condition? Yet, the merciless Jews, remembering that it is written in the Law that a culprit should be stretched on the ground to be scourged, moved with furious zeal, gather new strength and turn again to beating Him cruelly. Who are they that break out thus savagely upon One who is almost dead? O miscreant Jews, how execrable are you in your diabolical rage! But how much more is the blessed Jesus to be pitied and imitated in His painful sufferings!

Behold, O my soul! how He lies upon the ground, not having breath left in Him to move. Now it is that the

loving Saviour washes thee from all thy sins with that blood in which He is bathed. Now it is that He makes of this same blood a most precious ointment to dress thy putrid sores. Now He frees thee from all thy scourges, temporal and eternal, and by His fresh wounds opens to thee fresh fountains of grace.

O Jesus most lovely, Jesus most loving! I figure to myself this Thy blood, which I see on the ground all around me, as having fallen upon me; and if, hitherto, I was earth-cursed in Adam through sin, I look on myself now as earth-blessed and redeemed from the curse by Thy blood. O happy me! Be my sins ever so numerous, ever so grievous, the merciful Passion through which Thou hast been pleased to redeem me is more abundant and greater, and for it I return Thee heartfelt thanks.

I compassionate Thee, O my Redeemer! in Thy sufferings. If I could, by any refreshment, mitigate the bitterness of Thy pains, I certainly would not fail to do it. But what can I do? Poor Lazarus, mentioned in the Gospel, at least had the dogs to come and lick his sores. Thou hast not even a dog. Permit me, then, I beseech Thee, O my Jesus! to approach Thee in spirit, and like a dog to lick Thy sores with my tongue and extract from them the blessed liquor that may fill my heart with love for Thee. If I am unworthy to love Thee, Thou art most worthy to be loved, and it is the grace of this love that I hope for as a most sweet fruit of Thy bitter Passion.

In token of gratitude to Jesus for His blood shed for me, I shall offer with pious affections of my heart at least one tear, either of compassion or of love for Him, or of sorrow for my sins.

X. Jesus loves that we should, when meditating on His Passion, remember His most holy Mother as having always been His companion in sufferings and as having suffered in her heart all that which He suffered in His body, co-operating with Him by a special privilege in giving efficacy to the Redemption of the world. Representing her, then, to ourselves, according to what may be piously believed, as

present at the scourging of her Son, as hearing the hissing of the strokes, and seeing all the laceration of that most delicate and most innocent flesh, what pains, what groans, what sighs, what fainting may we suppose to have been hers?

Let us remark the countenance of Mary: how clouded is the serenity of her brow; how on her cheeks, on her lips, nothing can be seen but the paleness and horror of agony and death. Let us enter in thought within and contemplate her heart. How is it occupied? How fares it? Or, rather, where is it? In place of her heart nothing is to be seen but mockeries, scourges, wounds,—all is transformed into the Passion of her Son. As in it are united all the wounds that are spread from head to foot over the body of her Son, there is nothing there but a combination of wounds, or one wound composed of many wounds.

With sobs of compassion and with a voice which is understood only between Mother and Child: “Dear Son!” says she, “where is Thy beauty? Where the loveliness of Thy face? Ah, wherefore, can not I feel those strokes with Thee in my body, as I do interiorly in my soul? O immense charity! I adore those scourges and ignominies, which Thou so lovingly sufferest for the salvation of souls.” Thus speaking, while she offers to the Eternal Father for us all that Jesus suffers in His body, she offers for us likewise all that she suffers in her soul.

Praise and thanksgiving be to thy love, O Mary! I truly must acknowledge, as my only Redeemer, Jesus the Son of God and thy Son; but, without prejudice to the glory of thy Son, I acknowledge thee also as His faithful assistant in giving effect to the Redemption. O Mother of God and my most loving Mother! I sympathize with thee in the sorrow which thou endurest for me, and I pray thee to engrave on my heart one, at least, of thy wounds, that self-love may die in me and the love of God may ever live in me. By those tears of compassion that thou didst shed in the scourging of Jesus Christ, obtain for me tears of contrition to weep bitterly over my sins.



O Mother of Mercy, have mercy on me!

By the union of the Passion of Jesus Christ with the intercession of Mary is formed a most efficacious means for obtaining every grace from the divine Majesty. Of this means I shall avail myself in all my necessities.

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## CHAPTER L.

### JESUS CHRIST CROWNED WITH THORNS.

I. THE scourging over, the executioners rest after their fatigue, but to Jesus Christ is not offered a single moment of peace. Lying on the ground, covered with blood, and having to put His clothes on again, there is no one to give them to Him nor to offer Him a hand to assist Him to rise again to His feet, so that He is obliged to crawl on His hands and knees to look for them. First one, and then another, drives Him on with blows and kicks;—all appear more brutal in proportion as He is more meek. What confusion and what pain meanwhile to the blessed Jesus to be thus naked, with so many sores, in weather so cold, as the Gospel remarks! But oh! with what patience does He suffer all, the true Lamb of God! without opening His mouth. On the one side, He knows that He is worthy of reverence and honor; on the other, beholding Himself thus overwhelmed with outrages, He humbles and resigns Himself to His Eternal Father.

No sooner had He put on His clothes than the impious wretches, recollecting that He had been accused of desiring to make Himself king, go in haste to Pilate and ask leave to set Him up as a mock king and to have a comic entertainment. Therefore, they lead Him into the hall of the Praetorium, and calling together all the soldiery to see the farce and render Him more ridiculous, they make ready for the hateful spectacle of the true Son of God, the King of kings, the Lord of Heaven and earth, shown off as a sham king. Amid all the insults cast upon Jesus, let us



ever remember, O my soul, that He is God ; and being God, what is it that urges Him to endure such pains and ignominies except love? Love, I will add, which He bears to me individually.

But how is this possible, O my God! since in myself, miserable sinner, I discover nothing for which Thou shouldst love me. There are in me, on the contrary, many odious qualities that might force Thee to hate me. How is this possible? Still it is true, most true, that Thou hast loved me, and lovest me with a love sincere, constant, and proved by the test of a prodigious patience. Ah! that Thou shouldst love the innocent and the just I can easily comprehend; but that Thou shouldst love me, who am a sink of iniquity and vice, how can I believe this? Nevertheless I ought to believe it, and I do firmly believe it, for it is true.

Yes, O my Saviour! I believe that Thou lovest me, and because Thou lovest me I approach Thee with confidence to implore Thee, in the first place, to forgive me my sins; and, then, so to reform the tenor of my life according to Thy good pleasure that Thou mayest have reason to love me, and that I, pleasing Thee more and more, may be encouraged to love Thee in return for all ages without end. Whom shall I love if I love not Thee, who art infinitely deserving of love, especially of being loved by me who have infinite obligations to love Thee.

Moreover, having made satisfaction for the evil we have committed, Jesus Christ has also merited for us the grace to do good. With this grace I shall coöperate, not only by never offending Him, but by pleasing Him with virtuous actions.

II. The executioners are paid by the rulers of the Jews to torment Jesus Christ with every manner of strange invention, being moreover instigated and prompted by devils, and, as it were, possessed by infernal fury; in order, it would seem, to demand a final proof of His invincible patience, they contrive a torment highly dishonorable and painful, never before inflicted or read or heard of. They

take a bundle of long, hard, and sharp thorns, made into a crown, and they put it on His head, to exhibit Him as king of ignominies and tribulations.

Not one of His disciples is present at this exhibition so sad, so unworthy,—of His crowning with thorns. Divine Providence had thus ordained it most mercifully. For if they were in danger of losing their Faith when they beheld their divine Master apprehended in the garden, what danger would they have been in had they seen Him crowned with thorns and treated as a false king amid so much ridicule and mockery,—more than could be imagined by any one?

But thou, my soul! who hast been fortified by the power of the Holy Ghost in the Sacraments, attentively contemplate the blessed Jesus in this pitiful condition, and believe that He is so much the more deserving of being honored and loved as He is shamefully dishonored for thee. Experience within thee a small proportion, at least, of His pains and afflictions, and if thou canst do nothing more, make acts of amazement and terror on reflecting who it is that suffers.

Cast a glance at the height of heaven, contemplating the immense greatness of the infinite Majesty of God, the Creator of all things, who with one stroke of His omnipotence can annihilate the whole world. O what goodness, what beauty, what wisdom, what glory is His! Take another glance at Jesus, and behold that this Man so suffering, so debased, is the same great God and Lord of the universe. Marvel, and be astounded at the thought, that in the same person there should appear so many contradictions, and also how strangely in this case mercy is united to justice.

O my God, how terrible are Thy works! Terrible to me is the work of justice in the Passion, because if sin has been punished with so great severity in Thy most innocent Humanity, what punishment will not be inflicted upon me, a most wicked sinner? Terrible likewise to me is the work of Thy mercy. For what shall become of me if I do not avail myself of the many graces that Thou hast merited for me? Make me, O my God! fear Thy justice and also Thy mercy, so that I may never abuse them.

I shall moderate my fear with acts of hope, humbling myself to ask of the divine Majesty seasonable helps to co-operate with the Passion of Jesus Christ by sincere repentance for my sins.

III. After these wretches had crowned Jesus Christ with thorns they make Him sit upon a stool, and they arrange the crown upon Him in such a way that it encloses and presses on every part of His forebrow and head. Then, with sticks and their arms, they force it down so violently on His head that the thickest thorns, with a thousand punctures, enter the skull, and several penetrate so far as to wound even the tender brain. But there being about the head a number of nerves and veins that directly communicate with the heart, and the sense of feeling being most acute in the head as well as in the heart, what convulsions must He have endured, caused by such sharp and multitudinous pains?

O my soul! behold thy Lord Jesus Christ with His head encircled by that hedge of thorns, and invite thy faculties to exclaim, with accents of astonishment and compassion: O patience! O innocence! Patience incomparable, innocence unspeakable! But after having marveled and sympathized, let us proceed to the contemplation of the mystery. What are these thorns but our sins? Thorns are a consequence of the curse fulminated by God against the sin of Adam, and it is a fact that in the conscience of one who sins there always spring sharp, piercing thorns. Again, what did Jesus intend by submitting to the puncture of so many thorns but to take upon Himself our sins and the penalty due to us?

O Jesus, true Lily among thorns, Lily of most spotless purity amid the thorns of most horrible iniquities! I would have vented my indignation on the Jews, as though these thorns were the product of their ungrateful vineyard; but they are the fruits that the vineyard of my soul has borne. Oh! that this were not the truth, as indeed it is too palpable that my sins prick Thee, pierce Thee, pain Thee more than all the thorns with which the Jews

wounded Thee. My head is filled with vain-glory. Through a silly conceit I have of myself, through a foolish longing I have to be highly esteemed by others also, I have hitherto done nothing but crown my own pride with perishable flowers. On account of this Thou art crowned with a penitential crown of thorns; and I, beyond all others, am the actual cause of Thy pangs.

O most loving Saviour! grant, I beseech Thee, that those identical thorns may sting and pierce and thoroughly penetrate my heart with profitable sentiments of penance. Nothing but penance can cancel the enormities which I have perpetrated; and this penance being the most necessary virtue for so infamous a sinner as I am, it is this I desire, and which I implore Thee to grant me, through the most excruciating pains that Thou didst endure in Thy crowning with thorns. Without penance I shall not save my soul, and without Thy assistance I shall never be truly penitent.

If it is irksome to me to live the life of a penitent, I will reflect that I should not have lived like a sinner. I have sinned by pride. For my penance I shall wear on my head the sackcloth of humility through the mean opinion I ought to entertain of myself.

IV. Jesus Christ remaining, after His most cruel scourging, all covered with sores on His shoulders, His breast, His arms, His thighs and limbs, it seems that His head alone is sound. It is now that, in addition to its having been mutilated with cuffs, slaps, and blows, He is crowned with thorns in order that we may see the prophecy verified, which says, that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is not a spot in His most sacred body that is not covered with wounds.<sup>1</sup>

Contemplate, O my soul! thy most afflicted Saviour, and behold that from the numerous wounds on His head a shower of blood issues forth, which, running down in streams over His face, disfigures all His features. Nothing can be seen but blood, and what blood is this? It is the

(<sup>1</sup>) *Isaias* i, 6.



blood of a Man-God, shed by Him, not through violence or necessity, but by His own most loving will. It is blood from the wounds of His head, pierced by thy sins, and manipulated like a balmy ointment to heal thee of thy gangrened and mortal wounds.

Ah, my Jesus, my God! Thy blood falls not on the ground, it all falls on me. If all this blood is not sufficient to heal and cleanse me from my evil habits and vicious affections, what must I say or judge of myself except that my sinfulness is execrable? O my detestable wickedness! Instead of profiting by Thy blood for my amendment, I have hitherto done nothing, and still, from day to day, do nothing but add wound to wound, sin to sin, upon Thee and upon my own soul.

But do I not reflect that for every sorrow of Thine and for the least drop of Thy blood I shall have to render Thee a most strict account? I live a thoughtless, idle life in a state of lukewarm negligence; and, meanwhile, that fearful day is drawing near on which I shall weep and despair, because whichever way I shall turn I shall find neither mercy nor compassion. Ah, good Jesus! with my face in the dust, humbled, contrite and prostrate at Thy feet, I beg Thy mercy through the merits of that most precious blood with which Thou hast redeemed me. Hear the voice of Thy blood, which now cries mercy for me! May it never be that the same blood shall raise its voice against me and cry justice! *Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.*<sup>1</sup>

I shall frequently remember that the most formidable object for me on the Day of Judgment will be to see that, on the one hand, I have greatly coöperated in making Jesus Christ suffer; and, on the other, that I have coöperated little or not at all with His merits.

V. While we contemplate Jesus Christ covered with all these wounds, and with all this blood, let us reflect well who is this Sufferer so despised and so afflicted. He is the true Son of God, who, crowned with honor and glory, is

(<sup>1</sup>) Ps. 1, 1.



appointed by His Eternal Father Monarch of the universe; the true Son of man, who, crowned by the Virgin Mary with the crown of our humanity, shall also be crowned by the angels on the Day of Judgment with crowns of justice. He it is who is now crowned by the perfidious synagogue with a crown of thorns, a crown of pain and ignominy.

Go forth, my soul, with the daughters of Sion, to see thy King in this condition,—the true King of glory, because He is the Lord of virtues, *Dominus virtutum*. Thus, by His patience and humility, has He triumphed over the pride of the world, and He has been pleased to give us lessons of all the virtues by enduring all manner of pains and reproaches. In short, this is the lesson that He teaches us in the crowning with thorns: that the royal road that conducts to heaven is narrow, wearisome, and thorny. As there is no other way to arrive at eternal salvation except this very Jesus, behold in Jesus how our way is beset with thorns, and likewise behold what our life must be in imitation of the Saviour if we would be saved.

I deceive myself if I imagine I can wear a crown of roses amid the pleasures and pastimes of the world, and afterward be crowned again with glory in Paradise. For if even Jesus Christ, the Man-God, has had to enter into glory through sufferings, crowned with thorns, how shall I be able to enter therein crowned with flowers, leading an easy, luxurious life, granting every indulgence to my body and practising no kind of mortifications. Either here, or hereafter, we must endure the thorns. He that refuses here the thorns of penance and mortification, shall hereafter have the thorns of torments and the worm that never dies. This is an infallible truth. What, therefore, remains to me, except to examine myself and repent of the wilful self-deceit in which I have hitherto lived, and to determine on another and a different line of conduct?

Ah, my Jesus! who dost crown Thy elect with mercies, I thank Thee for Thy mercy, with which Thou hast now the goodness to enlighten me. I know that, to rejoice in eternity, I must suffer in time. Therefore, I implore Thee to

moderate in me the disorderly inclination that I have to gratify my passions. Give me love, constancy, and strength to suffer amid delights. I choose mortification in order to resemble Thee, as it is too great a shame for me to treat myself with delicacy while Thou art crowned with thorns. In order to render mortification easy I ask Thee, through Thy thorns, for the spirit of compunction.

On all occasions when some suffering comes in my way, whether by necessity or by choice, when I would mortify myself in some sense or fancy, I shall figure to myself Jesus Christ offering me one of His thorns. O dear and precious thorn!

VI. There is no stage in the Passion of Jesus Christ without a mystery, for since it was ordained in a general way for the remission of all our sins, we may say it was especially directed for the atonement of each particular sin. There is no part of our body with which we do not sin, and there is no part of the body of Jesus Christ that did not suffer a pain peculiar to itself. Thus, as in the head are formed sinful thoughts, we must understand that for those, in a special way, was He pleased to submit to the crowning with thorns.

If I could enumerate the sins committed by me in thought what horror would not this monstrous, overwhelming, calculation occasion me! How often have I formed in my head chimerical ideas of earthly greatness, vain or profane imaginations, obscene and mischievous idle thoughts destined to nourish vicious concupiscences? How often have I given entrance into my head to the flesh, the world, the devil, with their wicked suggestions? I knew that every evil thought was forbidden me by the divine Majesty under pain of severe punishment, and yet how often have I fixed my mind on every species of evil thought with actual malice, employing my very power of rational life to sin mortally?

Behold the fruit of my sins on the head of my Saviour! See with what a quantity of thorns the divine Word is stifled on my account! With how many thorns is transfixed

that sacred head which the Eternal Father crowned with flowers of sanctity! Ah, my Jesus! I can not behold Thee without being filled with confusion, as I can not see on Thy head a single thorn that is not mine. But what avails confusion, if I do not also excite myself to sorrow and penance? I am grieved. I repent of all the sins, O my God! that I have committed in thought. Above all, I am displeased at them, not so much for the evil that I have done to myself, exposing myself to the rigors of Thy justice, as for that which I have done to Thee, by inflicting so many wounds on Thee. Pity, mercy, pardon! In order that I may never again offend Thee, grant me one of those efficacious graces which Thou hast merited for me by the wound of that thorn which has pierced Thee most deeply.

Give me understanding, reason, a mind, that may think of and hearken to nothing but Thee. Give me such a spirit of chastity and continence that I may shun every evil thought as hell itself. In a word, give me Thy love. There is nothing more powerful for vigorously resisting thoughts of anger, envy, ambition, and any others that may be caused by carnal or infernal malice. If I possess Thy love, how shall I be able any longer to dwell on things displeasing to Thee? How shall I not always think of those things alone that tend to Thy glory?

I shall remember the wounds of Jesus Christ as a remedy against bad thoughts. When the mind is occupied with good thoughts, evil thoughts have no power over it.

## CHAPTER LI.

### JESUS CHRIST MOCKED AS A FALSE KING.

I. PILATE is aware of the shameful treatment endured by Jesus Christ. He is silent, and allows all in order to gratify the Jews, imagining that they will at length be appeased and desist from furiously insisting upon His death. But they are more enraged than ever, through their firm

conviction that He had aspired to become king of Israel. Therefore they delight in making game of Him, and amuse themselves in mocking and insulting Him as a ridiculous, sham king.

Having, then, placed on His head, as a diadem, the crown of thorns, they throw about Him, as a royal mantle, a piece of purple cloth, old, tattered and mean, so that He may appear the more contemptible beneath this semblance of majesty.

The Prophets had foretold this insulting degradation which the Saviour of the world was to endure, when He should be covered with excessive shame from head to foot,—so great that it may be readily believed that the devil was the instigator of it. But oh, how completely has the king of the proud, by this very means, been discomfited and put to confusion by the King of the humble! The devil has done his utmost to bring upon Jesus Christ dishonor and abjection, but all that his malice could invent has served for nought, except for the advancement of humility and for our eternal salvation. In Jesus Christ nothing is useless. It is not His Humanity only which is humbled, but the humiliation redounds even upon His Divinity. And it is by the humility of this Man-God that we are redeemed from the slavery of sin and from the slavery of hell.

However, if I am not humble what shall I gain, O my God! by all Thy humility and all Thy humiliation? Have I not reason to be terrified when I contemplate Thee, who, clothed with the dignity of the Son of God, true King of heaven and of earth, endurest with so much forbearance and calmness to be treated as a false king and to make so contemptible a figure, and then, look upon myself, who, being a wretched worm, a handful of dust, a nothing, have not learned as yet, by Thy example, to make one genuine act of humility?

Why is there in me so much repugnance, so much reluctance to suffer a wrong, a slight rudeness, a disrespectful word? The obstacle that prevents my practising humility is my pride alone. And is it possible that at the sight



of a God thus humbled I should not learn to be humble? O my Jesus, would that I could understand what Thou sayest to me by Thy silence! Make me realize the obligation I am under to imitate Thee. Impress on me an exalted idea of what Thou hast suffered for me, and I shall account as sweet all that shall fall to my lot to suffer for Thee.

After having read or meditated on the Passion of Jesus Christ, I too soon forget it all. Therefore, I shall fix in my mind at least His silent humility, which it is so evidently my duty to imitate.

II. In reading the Passion of Jesus Christ, we ought not to confine our attention to the simple letter of the Gospel; we should enter more deeply and penetrate the sense of it. There are great mysteries contained in this purple with which the Saviour is arrayed. Choosing, then, what is applicable to ourselves:—as by the white garment that was put on Him in the house of Herod was symbolized His innocence, so by the red one with which He is now clothed in the Court of Pilate we see our sins represented, as we may gather from the Scripture. We should exclaim as we gaze upon it: Behold the Messiah, the Beloved of the Eternal Father! white and ruddy, clothed in His all-holy Humanity with fine linen and crimson cloth.

Be horrified, O my soul! at seeing that spotless Man-God covered with so many iniquities and enormities, and reflect how much more thy wickedness oppresses, overwhelms and afflicts Him than the ignominy of that ragged mantle. Again considering that by the purple is moreover signified His inflamed charity, acknowledge how much thou art bound to love and thank Him in return. Is it possible that thy heart can still remain hard with this belief that a God, out of His infinite goodness, has been pleased to take upon Himself thy sins and to suffer for thee such innumerable woes?

My God, how good Thou art, how merciful, how loving toward this Thy creature, the most unworthy and most ungrateful in the world! With immense charity Thou hast



taken on Thyself my sins in Thy crowning with thorns, and with the same crown of thorns Thou also hast atoned for them, meriting for me by it in addition a blessed crown of glory. Nevertheless, Thou hast again on another occasion taken on Thee my sins in that ragged, filthy garment, and with it Thou hast covered and remitted them, cutting out anew for me of that purple a garment of eternal salvation. O unparalleled charity! To Thee be praises and everlasting blessings for Thy love!

Never again shall I be mistrustful of the forgiveness of my sins, although I may never be able to satisfy for them by penance, being convinced, as I am, that Thy mercy infinitely surpasses all my guilt. Beneath the mantle of Thy charity I seek shelter. In Thee, my Jesus! I trust; and, full of confidence, I ask no more that Thou wouldst give me long life or temporal prosperity. I ask Thee to bestow on me only Thy mercy,—more precious than all the lives of the world. Have mercy on me, and I shall be indebted to Thee forever, in time and in eternity, to endless ages.

I shall correspond with the love of Jesus Christ, redoubling acts of love toward Him, with a will resigned and disposed to choose whatever pleases Him, and to choose nothing that displeases Him.

III. In order that Jesus Christ may be regarded as a false, mock king, after placing on His head as a diadem the crown of thorns and on His back the ragged purple for a robe, they also put in His hand, by way of sceptre, a common reed, to show either that He is a silly fool in making Himself king or that His kingdom is empty, without power or authority, since He can not defend Himself against all these outrages. He knows, because He knows Himself, the exceeding wrong that is inflicted on Him. Nevertheless He accepts this reed, and refuses no sorrow, no dishonor, but suffers those miscreants to do to Him all they please, without uttering a word or giving a sign of the affliction that oppresses Him.

Here we have an evident proof of the truth of what He said a while ago, that His kingdom is not of this world.

That is, that it is not a kingdom obtained by riches or by force of arms, but by poverty, patience and abasement. Reflect, my soul! The kingdom of Jesus Christ is a kingdom of eternal glory; see in Him an example of how it has to be conquered. Canst thou say to thyself, with a clear conscience, that thou art not far from this kingdom by the practice of these virtues? In what degree have we poverty of spirit? In what degree patience? In what degree humility?

I do not see in myself a single virtue that can be denominated genuine virtue. How then dare I hope for the kingdom of heaven, which is won by virtue alone, by doing violence to the passions and the senses? Every time that I repeat the Lord's Prayer, at the words, *Adveniat regnum tuum*, I pray the Lord to make me worthy of His blessed kingdom; but in what manner do I afterward coöperate with Him to render my prayer efficacious?

Ah, my Jesus! I am an empty, unstable reed, that permits itself to be carried away with every wind. I have good desires, and at times I make profitable resolutions; but, do I keep them? When I appear to wish to do right, I surrender by a guilty inconstancy to evil. O merciful Saviour! who didst take in Thy hand that ridiculous reed in order to fortify my frailty by Thy merits and fix my instability by Thy example, succor me with Thy help.

The true cause of my inconstancy in virtue and the reason of my yielding to vice is because I rely upon myself, and do not realize that I am a weak, miserable reed. Impart to me, O good Jesus! a little of Thy humility; and, speedily mistrusting myself, I shall rest on Thee alone, I shall confide in Thee alone, I shall fulfil my duties, and shall happily arrive at the possession of that sceptre of glory in the kingdom which Thou hast merited for me by the ignominy of the reed.

From Jesus Christ, with the reed in His hand, I shall learn to count as vanity, as empty reeds, all the things of the world. Success, pleasures, honors,—all are vanity. I shall treat vanity as vanity, and I shall aspire to eternity.

IV. Jesus Christ being thus seated, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple mantle, with the reed in His hand, the soldiers endeavor in every way to insult Him to the utmost limits of the most insolent audacity. Having dressed Him as a mock king, they amuse themselves by making game of Him and laughing at Him, as a miserable man who has neither the desire nor the power to make himself a king. One by one they pass before Him, each saluting Him and saying: *Hail, king of the Jews!*<sup>1</sup> Each one tries to outdo the others in pronouncing this salutation with the most extravagant grimaces. They glory at beholding Him thus railed at and derided. What is now wanting to the full accomplishment of the predictions that He had made concerning Himself, in conformity with the Prophetic oracles?

With the soldiers are also mingled the Jews. Let us take a view, in the first place, of these impious scoffers, full of hatred and rage; then of the blessed Jesus, who sits with downcast eyes, modest, peaceful, meek, willing to endure every affront. They know not what they say, nor what they do. Meanwhile, what mysteries are they not accomplishing for us? They call Him King, with the malicious intention of reproachfully putting Him to shame; but, at the same time, they confess what He is and say the truth without perceiving it.

Yes, my Jesus! Thou art the King of Glory,—a King the most true, the most great, the most august of kings. Thou art the King and the Crown of Thine elect, my King and my God, and as such I acknowledge Thee, I proclaim Thee, I exalt Thee! To Thee I offer my service and obedience, with the determined resolution of being wholly Thine for evermore. And since I do not trust my own resolution, which is too vacillating, with profound submission I make my humble appeal to Thee. I believe that Thou art able, and I hope that Thou art willing, so to strengthen my weakness that I may accomplish Thy will forever with

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvii, 29.

fidelity and perseverance. So be it, then, as I earnestly implore of Thee!

O divine King! with all my heart I compassionate Thee in Thy deplorable condition,—so dishonored and ill-treated as sham king of the Jews. I console myself, and at the same time congratulate myself with Thee that Thou art venerated and magnified by the choir of angels as their sovereign King. *God save Thee, O my King! God save Thee!* I intend this my reverential salutation to be repeated a million of times. While saying, *God save Thee!* I also purpose to pray Thee to save my soul, my most merciful Saviour!

I shall reflect whether it be a resolution, or a half wish, that I have to be established in the divine grace. A real resolution humbles itself to pray to God, and avails itself of grace to do what it ought.

V. The Jews remark to the soldiers that Jesus Christ has had the presumption to aspire not only to be king, but, moreover, Son of God. Wherefore they take occasion to mock Him on this point, and at the same time as they laugh at Him as a false king they add other insults. They genuflect before Him in all manner of unbecoming ways, making a pretence of adoring Him in order to make Him appear as a false God. The fools imagine that if He was God, or if He was king, He could and would defend Himself; and because He does not defend Himself, but remains silent, keeping His power concealed and allowing nothing but His patience to be seen, they continue to provoke Him more and more with contempt.

What sayest thou, O my soul! on beholding that God, who in the Old Testament was called the God of Vengeance, the Lord of Hosts, the strong, the mighty Warrior, now taking delight in showing Himself the God of patience, feeling no resentment under a flood of affronts? Shall we have any excuse for our anger, or any reason for being impatient in tribulations and adversities, after beholding this example of our most patient Saviour?

Again let us reflect on the fact. In the same way that



Caiphas condemned Jesus Christ, not knowing what he said, so now the soldiers adore Him blindly and ignorantly, not knowing what they do,—and we must add that their profanity is an instructive mystery for us. What was then done is now equally done by whoever believes Jesus Christ to be true God, and who does not observe His Evangelical law, as if it were a fabulous law of some false god or other. The same is done by whoever believes Jesus Christ to be the Sovereign Good, and prefers to Him any vile good of this world.

How frequently, O my Jesus! have I, too, thus mocked Thee, acting wholly in opposition to what Thy Faith prescribed for me, pretending to pay Thee homage and maliciously offending Thee? I deplore my disloyalty and hypocrisy; and while I see Thy enemies kneeling before Thee in mockery, I prostrate myself in Thy presence, with a contrite and humble heart, to venerate Thee and sincerely adore Thee. No one, in the entire course of Thy Passion, has bent the knee to Thee except when Thou wast crowned with thorns, because it is amid thorns that Thou makest Thyself known as true God, prefigured to Moses in the burning bush. With all possible reverence, therefore, I adore Thee as my divine Saviour, and I entreat Thee to be a Saviour to me and to work out my eternal salvation.

I shall renew acts of faith and hope, remembering that it is a dead faith and a dead hope that is not accompanied by good works. How do I live? What do I do for my eternal salvation?

VI. After insulting words, fits of laughter, scornful jokes the most outrageous that could be uttered against a personage of such exalted dignity as was that of Our Lord Jesus Christ, they proceed to action. They surround Him; some buffet Him, some spit on His face, not yet dry from the quantity of spittle already cast upon it; some remove the reed from His hand and strike His head, so that where it is soft the thorns are driven in deeper; where it is hard, they are either broken or they exasperate the wound more and more, and cause most frightful convulsive pangs.



They devise every act of cruelty to torture Him, and no portion of His body remains unhurt.

Who has given those men this savage ingenuity to dishonor and torment, all at once, in ways so new and unheard-of, this innocent Victim, who has always been beneficent to every one. We may believe that devils were there, in troops, to fill those ministers with fury and to incite them to extraordinary bitterness. However this may be, it is certain that it was thus ordained by the wisdom and justice of God, in fulfilment of the Scriptures, that the ignominies of Jesus Christ should be so painful and His pains so ignominious, that the exceeding hatred might be made known which the Eternal Father bears against sin, and likewise the exceeding love that His Incarnate Son bears to sinners.

If any one could have beheld the condition of the soul of Jesus, oppressed by such ignominies and such sorrows, what a marvel would it have been to see combined in Him exceeding sadness at our sins which occasioned Him such woes, and exceeding joy at the glory that He was giving to God, and for the salvation of souls for which He was laboring? He was afflicted at our iniquities on account of their immense hatefulness, and He rejoiced at the plentiful Redemption of the human race.

Impart to me, O my Redeemer! that holy hatred that Thou dost entertain for sin, so that I may always feel both sorrow and horror at it. Impart to me, moreover, for charity's sake, Thy love, that I may love Thee with the same love with which I am loved. I desire to love Thee, but I know not whether I really love Thee. What must I do to make sure of having this love? Ah, my Jesus! I shall know that I love Thee when I shall strive to imitate Thee; when, in order to obey and please Thee, I shall endeavor to mortify myself. With Thy assistance, I resolve to do this.

I shall decide upon the mortifications that I resolve to practise; and I shall, in a special manner, undertake those of which I stand in the most need in order to work in myself a reformation internal and external.

## CHAPTER LII.

## JESUS CHRIST SHOWN BY PILATE TO THE PEOPLE.

I. JESUS CHRIST being in this wretched condition, all covered with sores and blood, and scantily clad, with little but the purple robe about Him, those tormentors bind fast His hands and in His hands they bind the reed. Then, throwing a cord around His neck, as if He were a beast, they lead Him from the court into the hall, all the while continuing their reproaches and jokes, to let Pilate see Him in this figure of a sham, mock king. It was not sufficient to have made a spectacle of Him to a company of soldiers, called together on purpose; to increase His shame, they choose to make Him appear before the governor and the Roman nobility who are about the court.

What confusion must it have been to Him to see Himself in the midst of these people thus degraded? Since the world has existed, we do not read of any malefactor being punished by tyrants or barbarians with such pains and ignominies as Our Lord Jesus Christ, who came, indeed, to make atonement for our sins, but who was Himself unspotted and stainless, without the least blemish of sin of His own. There was nothing common or ordinary in His Passion;—be it pain, dishonor, all reaches the utmost excess. However hard may be our heart, how can it fail to be touched with tenderness at the thought of the true Son of God thus humbled and reduced to such extremities?

But bear with me, O my Lord! if with all reverence I ask Thee: If, in order to liberate our souls from sin and hell, sufferings so strange were necessary, why not send an angel or an archangel in Thy place? In Thy wounds I read Thy love, but mightest Thou not, at least, have had some other being to suffer for Thee? Reflect, my soul. If an angel had redeemed us, our love would have been divided: a part given to God, our Creator, and the other part to the angel, our redeemer. But this was not becoming. Hence, that God who created us has been pleased also to

redeem us, in order that our heart might not be divided and our love might be consecrated wholly to Himself.

Therefore, if Thou alone, O my God! oughtest to be loved by me as my Creator and my Redeemer, what lawless iniquity has been mine until now to love a most vile creature more than Thee? More than Thee to love myself, my own flesh, my own concupiscence, and so many other things? I have erred, and I repent. Henceforth I consecrate to Thee my whole heart. I shall no longer live but for Thee. I shall love no one except Thee. I ought to be wholly Thine, because Thou hast created and redeemed me, and wholly Thine I will be. But ah, my Creator, my Redeemer! succor me with Thy efficacious helps. Do not abandon nor despise the work of Thy hands.

I shall frequently make acts of love and sorrow. I shall be ashamed of my self-love, and I shall endeavor to make amends for my delinquencies, at least by humility, acknowledging myself good-for-nothing.

II. Jesus Christ comes into the presence of Pilate, the governor, dragged rather than led by the soldiery. Pilate no sooner sees Him, than he is horrified to behold Him so maltreated. Although he was a Gentile, he was of a mild and kindly disposition, quite contrary to the haughtiness of the Jews. Hence he is moved to compassion; and, desirous of liberating Him, whom he knows to be innocent, he resolves to show Him to the people, with the firm confidence that any one that sees Him, however great may be the rage and hatred that he feels against Him, will certainly be appeased on beholding Him so severely punished and reduced to so wretched a state,—that, far from being like a king, He has not even the appearance of a man.

Take one look at thy Lord, my soul, and reflect. Hast thou not reason to be confounded in comparing thyself with Pilate, who is moved to tenderness at the sight of the suffering Jesus, whilst thou art so hard, so destitute of pity and affection as to have no compassion for Him? Think well that thou art bound to feel toward Him an exceeding love, since it is for thee that He suffers so much in His

body and in His soul. Thou art deeply indebted to Him for having created thee. But, oh! how very much more for having thus redeemed thee! The creation of thyself and of the whole world was effected by two or three words from His mouth, but see at the cost of how much pain and how much blood He has wrought thy Redemption! See how much greater are thy incalculable obligations to Him for this benefit than for all besides: that by His dishonor He has honored thee; by His bands He has set thee free; by His wounds He has made thee sound.

Ah, my Jesus! I know and confess it. It is true that I am more indebted to Thee for the torments which Thou hast suffered to redeem me than for the omnipotent word by which Thou didst create me. If I owe all that I am to Thee, as my Creator, how much more do I owe Thee as my Redeemer? I owe to Thee all that I am and have. But what am I of myself, and what have I of my own, but nothing? What I am and what I have of good is all Thine, O my God! Of myself I have nothing worth offering to Thee, even of what is Thine, without Thy aid. Ah, my Jesus! take possession of that which is Thine in me; and if I am all Thine, because Thou hast created and redeemed me, grant that I may be all Thine by virtue also of my imitating and loving Thee. Behold my heart, which desires to love Thee, but with all its efforts can not do so. Strengthen it with Thy most holy grace. There is none but Thou who canst make of this heart of stone a son of Abraham.

I shall take the three powers of my soul, and the five senses of my body, and make an offering of them to Jesus Christ as a token of love, to use them for the time to come only for His glory.

III. With the intention of pacifying the enraged Jews, who had come in crowds before the palace to hear the result of the judgment, Pilate goes out upon the public balcony that he may expose Him to the gaze of all. "Behold," he says to them, "I present to you this Man, that seeing Him in His unhappy and pitiable state you may relent and mitigate your rage against Him, on my declaring to you



that He is absolutely innocent of crime and that there are no grounds for His condemnation." By these words the governor accuses himself, as if repentant; and confessing that he had unjustly caused to be scourged that blessed Jesus, whom he acknowledged to be innocent, puts forth this strong and intelligible argument: That if Jesus Christ has been scourged unjustly, since He was innocent, it would be much more against justice to condemn Him to die. O power of truth and innocence! Satan, by the invention of new torments, may render Our Saviour's Passion to the last degree painful; but, with all his malice, he can not bring about that the honor of innocence should be taken away from Him who is innocent.

I shall reflect upon myself, regarding myself as like to Pilate. Twice, within a short previous space, the unjust judge has declared Jesus Christ innocent, and yet he has condemned Him to be scourged. After the flagellation, he again confesses His innocence. Nevertheless, He will not refrain from condemning Him to death. Is not this precisely what I am constantly doing? Every time I approach the Sacrament of Penance I confess that God is the Sovereign Good, who does not deserve to be offended; and yet, very soon after, I offend Him, making my life a vicious round of sins and Confessions. But of what use are these Confessions, except, like those of Pilate, to augment my malice and to increase the burden of my iniquities?

I repent and accuse myself of these Confessions, O my God! I greatly fear they have been badly made, since I have never applied myself in earnest to amendment. One effect of Thy Passion is, that the sinner receives the pardon of his sins when he is truly penitent. How many times, then, have I abused Thy Passion by approaching Confession unworthily? Mercy, O my God; and oh, by Thy grace, assist me to repair my defects and to supply for them. It is impossible that one who has sinned should be reconciled to Thee without that sincere repentance that brings with it amendment.

I shall examine myself on my bad habits, that I may



study to correct them. Amendment gives the best ground for hope that we have obtained pardon in Confession through the mercy of God.

IV. Pilate, seeing that however much he may say in favor of Jesus Christ it profits nothing,—nay, that a noisy murmur is beginning to arise amongst the crowd,—turns toward the same Lord and makes Him advance to the middle of the balcony so that all may see Him thus crowned with thorns, with the reed in His hand and the purple garment on His shoulders, and that from the shocking treatment He has received every one may comprehend that the innocent Man has been already too severely punished.

We may imagine what shame and confusion it must be to the Lord of Glory, and Monarch of the Universe, to see Himself in so opprobrious a condition in the presence of such a multitude of people! His humility is not understood, because His greatness is not understood. Let us always remember His Divinity in meditating on the ignominy that His Humanity suffers. He who now exposes Himself in the character of a mock king is the Man-God. And, as the power of God in the working of miracles has redounded to the honor and glory of the Humanity, so the abjection of the Man beneath the scoffs and insults that are offered to Him redounds to the contempt of God. But why has that God, who is the wisdom of the Father and who never does anything in vain, willed to humble Himself thus? Behold the reason: God has humbled Himself in this manner that man may be exalted. Who, then, will refuse to humble himself for the love of God after God has thus humbled Himself for us? Who will refuse to humble himself, animated by the hope of that eternal exaltation which Jesus Christ has merited for us by His humiliations?

O Jesus, the highest of all and the most debased of all! I return thanks again and again, as well as I know how and as much as I am able, to Thy infinite goodness. But what shall I say to render thanks for Thy humility? Whilst I behold Thee suffering this public dishonor with such meekness and patience, content to be the by-word and

the reproach of the world, I feel myself, on the one hand, moved to compassion; but, on the other, filled also with confusion at seeing myself so far removed from the imitation of Thee. Oh, how humble Thou art! And oh, how proud am I! I yield to passion, and resent every word of contempt that is addressed to me. But do I intend to continue in this way until death?

Ah, my most humble Saviour! let this not be the case. I have motives for humbling myself in my body, which is a handful of mire; and I have still greater cause for humbling myself in my soul, which is a vessel of malice and iniquity. But there is nothing more efficacious to make me humble than the example of Thy humility. I desire this virtue that I may become one with Thee and may please Thee, but I have not strength to practise it, because I know not how to do violence to myself in order to overcome my haughty self-love. I beg for those graces from Thee which Thou hast merited for me by Thy humility in suffering so much confusion and ignominy. Thou, who dost assist me to pray to Thee, help me also to imitate Thee.

I shall reflect on what occasions and in what things I desire most to be esteemed and honored, and in these I shall mortify myself for the love of Jesus Christ by doing violence to myself.

V. Our Lord Jesus Christ being thus, to His unspeakable confusion, exposed to the eyes of His enemies, Pilate takes hold of the border of His purple garment to uncover Him so that every one may see Him lacerated by the scourges, wounded, bleeding, and so disfigured that He no longer appears to be a man. In thus showing Him forth he repeats only these words, *Behold the Man!*<sup>1</sup> He thinks this will suffice. Meaning to say: "If you fear that this Man will make Himself king, look at Him and see how He has been abused. In such a state, is He not more worthy to be compassionated by you than hated?"

Come, my soul, take a part in this spectacle and look attentively at thy Lord, how His head is crowned with

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 5.

thorns, His face livid, swollen, and defiled with phlegm, how His hands are bound, His body all wounded and blackened, as had already been foretold by the Prophets,—the most despised and afflicted of mankind, who has no longer even the semblance of man. Where is the comeliness of that divine countenance, which a short time previously ravished the eyes and the affections of every one? How has the most beautiful and most graceful of men become so unsightly and despised?

Ah, my Jesus! it is Thy charity which caused Thee to assume human nature, that has also reduced Thee now to such a state of deformity. Nothing else than Thy love has brought Thee to a state wherein Thou excitest horror. But though Thou art so disfigured, nevertheless how beautiful Thou art in my eyes, for Thy deformities to me are ornaments of spiritual beauty. Although Thou art in so pitiable a condition, nevertheless how strong and courageous Thou art in my behalf to work out my eternal salvation.

Oh! by that love which Thou hast had for my soul, even to suffer for it so bitter a Passion, impress upon me the high esteem in which I ought to hold that soul. It is worth more than the whole world, because it is worth Thy most precious blood, which is of infinite value. How then am I such an idiot as to prize it less than all that is in the world,—less than my own very flesh, which is corruption? From the little care that I take of my soul Thou hast reason, O my Saviour! to reproach me that Thy blood is unfruitful for me. I am determined to be saved, and I shall infallibly be saved, to Thy glory, if I practise as I intend to do, and with Thy help as I hope to do, that humility and charity which have been taught me by Thy example.

I shall adore Jesus Christ in His most sacred body, and especially in His head, which is the most tormented. I shall make acts of confidence in this Man-God, and I shall fortify myself in my resolution to imitate Him.

VI. Whilst Pilate shows Jesus Christ to the Jews, saying to them, *Behold the Man!*<sup>1</sup> to excite in them some feel-

(1) St. John xix, 5.

ing of humanity, I shall represent to myself that the Eternal Father shows Him to me in the same manner and says to me, *Behold the Man!* Open, my soul, the eyes of thy mind to this vision, and the ears of thy heart to these words.

"Behold," says the Father from on high, "Behold the Man" whom I have sent for thy salvation into the world, as a mark of that eternal charity with which I have loved thee. Till now I have sought, and have not found, one who would interpose himself for thee to appease my just anger. Now, "Behold the Man!" not Man alone, but Man-God, the figure of My substance, who alone has power to be the Mediator to reconcile man with God. By sin thou wert exiled from Paradise and condemned to hell, and there was no one that could help thee. But, "Behold the Man!" the Son of Man and My Son, destined to be thy Redeemer, thy Saviour. "Behold the man!" the Master of truth, the Model of sanctity, whom thou must imitate if thou desirest to be saved.

O best of fathers, O Eternal Father! how much am I indebted to Thee for having loved me to such a degree as to pour on Thy Son such a deluge of woes, which were all due to me! O most astounding charity! I can not express the consolation that I feel interiorly in meditating on the excess of Thy love! How is it possible that I am not filled with confusion for my perverse neglect of the example of this same Son of Thine?

Oh, how humble and meek is this King of Glory amidst His ignominies! How patient is this Man of Sorrows in His sufferings! How proud and haughty am I amid my miseries; how much in love with vanities, how anxious for earthly comforts! Ah, Eternal Father! since Thou showest me this Man, and commandest me to imitate Him, conquer my malice by Thy grace, that I may blot out in myself all the traces of the old earthly man and reform myself according to the likeness of this divine Man. O Father and Bestower of lights! here am I, with the confidence which Thou givest me, beseeching Thy clemency to enable me to imitate the virtues of Jesus and to reform



myself so completely in thoughts, words, and actions, that I may no longer be what I have been, but a new man according to Thy good pleasure.

I shall constantly meditate on the virtues of Jesus Christ, in His abjection, with love, desire, and resolutions to imitate them, animating myself by reflecting on my obligations to obtain them if I would be saved.

VII. As the Eternal Father exhibits to us Jesus Christ in the unhappy state in which Pilate presented Him to the Jews, to oblige us to compassionate and imitate Him, let us, also, my soul, imprint deeply on ourselves the idea of Jesus Christ in His disfigured form, and let us represent that form to the Eternal Father with the most affectionate energy of our hearts.

O God of Majesty, holy Father! behold the Man begotten by Thee in the brightness of the saints, and sent into the world full of grace and truth. Thou showest Him to me that I may be moved to compassion for Him, and I show Him to Thee that Thou mayest be moved to have compassion on me. Behold who He is that suffers. He is Thy most innocent and most beloved Son. Remember for whom He suffers. It is for me, a most vile and wretched sinner. To induce Thee to have mercy on me I can place before Thee nothing sweeter, nothing stronger than Thy Son.

Behold the Man—more than man, the Man-God,—who for me has deigned to subject Himself to cuffs, to bonds, to spitting, scourges and scoffs. This has been a work of ineffable mercy, and on that work I beg of Thee, O Almighty Lord! to fix the eyes of Thy Majesty. I have been able of myself to offend Thee, but of myself I have nothing whereby I can make satisfaction. Behold, then, the divine Man, my only Hope, who has abundantly satisfied for me. He it is, O omnipotent Father! whom I present to Thee, and can I present anything more precious or more dear to Thee?

My sins are grievous, exceedingly grievous; but, when placed in the scales with the merits of Jesus Christ, how incomparably does the grace of the Redeemer outweigh the

malice of the sinner! I place against my pride the humility of Jesus; against my impatience, the patience of Jesus; against my anger, the meekness of Jesus; against my aversion and ill-will, the charity and sweetness of Jesus; against my sloth and tepidity, His fervor. For the sins that I have committed with the powers of my soul, I offer the afflicted and humbled soul of Jesus; for the sins committed by the senses of my body, I offer the wounded, suffering body of Jesus. Look upon the sacred Humanity of Jesus; this suffices to console me, with the confidence that my iniquities will be pardoned by Thy clemency.

I shall also say to the Holy Ghost, Behold the Man! for whom Jesus Christ has sacrificed Himself in His Passion. I shall ask of Him the spirit of penance, to make me worthy of His mercy.

VIII. In meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ we must not separate fear from hope. Therefore, considering His confusion at the moment in which Pilate shows Him so disfigured and bruised to an immense crowd, saying, "Behold the Man!" this is an image of what will take place at the Last Judgment, when this Man-God, now so abject, appearing in the majesty of Judge, shall make an exhibition of me in the presence of the whole world.

"Behold the man!" it will be said of me, exposed to the eyes of all the angels and all men. "Behold the man!" who has been attached to vanity and neglectful of God! The man, fallen from the condition of man, and become like the beasts in the fury of his brutal appetites. "Behold the man," it will be said, and at the same moment will be discovered before all every one of my sins in thought, word, and deed. What shall I say? How shall I answer the reproaches which my own conscience will make me? Full of shame, confused and trembling, I shall stand before Thee, O my Judge! and shall not be able to utter a word in my defence.

What ignominy, what infamy will be mine before the whole universe, when every one shall behold my sinfulness and shall point the finger at me, saying, "Behold the man,"

proud, hypocritical, scandalous! Ah, my Jesus! I believe that I shall one day be present at that Last Judgment, and that Thou wilt be a most severe Judge of my sins, which now are the cause of Thy sufferings. And what shall then become of me? Ah! let me not fall into despair; give me strength to breathe again with hope. Have pity, have mercy, Lord! because however great a sinner I am, Thou art and wilt always be my Saviour. My sins make me fear exceedingly, but do Thou grant that I may never on this account diffide in Thy mercy, through the merits of Thy most precious blood. I wish that I were able to blot out all my sins, and since I can do this only by means of sorrow and repentance, I grieve for them, and repent of them, and purpose frequently to sorrow and grieve for them. I am a poor blind creature, most liable to fall into sin, and most inclined to forget that I have sinned; but, for the sake of Thy holy Passion, grant me this mercy, O compassionate Jesus! to make me a true penitent, by a perfect hatred for sin and a perfect love of Thee, the Sovereign Good. Therefore, on the Day of Judgment, I shall have the hope of Thine elect.

If I do not wish that, at the Last Judgment, it should be said of me, "Behold the man," the sinner, I must so regulate my life that of me it may be said, "Behold the man," penitent, contrite, and humbled.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### THE JEWS CRY OUT, LET JESUS BE CRUCIFIED!

I. PILATE permitted that Jesus Christ should be tormented and dishonored by his ministers in order that the anger of the Jews might be appeased; he also exposed Him to the eyes of all, thus scourged, crowned with thorns, disgracefully dressed out and reproachfully scoffed at, so that their envy might be softened, and he said to them, in a compassionate tone, "Behold the Man!" to move them to

pity. But the malice and malignity of the perfidious wretches rather increase, insomuch that having lost all humanity and become more ferocious even than wild beasts, they scarcely catch a glimpse of Him before they become more furious than ever in desiring His death, not being able to endure to see Him alive.

Behold, my soul! how in front of Jesus, in this deplorable state, there is an innumerable multitude of Jews, and hear how all, nobles and plebeians, cry out loudly, "Let Jesus be crucified."<sup>1</sup> Does not thy heart tremble within thy breast, and is not thy soul horrified, to hear these cries? O how different are these wicked yells from those joyful salutations with which, five days ago, He was proclaimed King of Israel! This is the way of the world. Now it exalts, then it oppresses; now it embraces, again it betrays. Where is our common sense to place in it—so false, so treacherous, as it is,—our love and confidence?

But let us reflect, my soul! how often, if not by mouth, certainly by the wickedness of works, have we also cried out against Jesus Christ, *Crucifige! Crucifige!*<sup>2</sup> O misery! O inconstancy! I shall rather say, O malice! O perverseness of mine! In my Confessions and Communion, in my prayers, in the other exercises of a Christian life, I acknowledge Thee, O my God! I adore Thee as my supreme Lord, and my Sovereign Good;—but what then? A very short time elapses, and I am fascinated by my passions and I impiously hurry on to crucify Thee by sin, forgetful of having a short time previously acknowledged and adored Thee as God.

Ah, my God! my iniquity strikes me with the greatest horror, greater than that of the Jews; but since, by a ray of Thy divine light, I now learn the grievousness of my sins, what can I do as an atonement? To compensate for these sinful deeds, by which I have cried *Crucifige!* my heart shall exclaim with bitterness, "I have sinned!" and with tears of repentance my eyes shall cry out and call on Thee for pardon. Loving Jesus! to Thee I faithfully resign the

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Mark xv, 14.      (<sup>2</sup>) Ibid.



remainder of my life, and for the errors of my past life I shall not cease to pray that Thou wouldst deign to give me a contrite and humble heart, never again displeasing to Thy divine Majesty,—a heart contrite for having offended Thee, and humble so as not to offend Thee more. I shall cast reproaches on myself as I would upon the Jews, that whilst Jesus Christ is brought before me with *Ecce Homo!*<sup>1</sup> I feel moved neither to compassion nor to compunction.

II. Any other people, no matter how savage, would have been moved to pity at the sight of Jesus Christ. The Jews alone, accustomed to resist God and to rage against the great men sent by God, could be destitute of compassion. It is no longer a few that speak against Him; they all cry out violently together, and their cry is that Jesus be put to death, not by an ordinary death, but by the most cruel and ignominious of all deaths,—that of the cross. They appear like troops of soldiers in battle, as the Prophet had foretold, and their tongues are so many arrows and swords, that take aim at Jesus as at a target set up on purpose.

We must conceive this hatred of the Jews as violent to the greatest possible degree, as truly diabolical, in order to form an idea, not so much of the external abjection of Jesus, as of His internal virtue, and to infer how incomparably His charity exceeds the fury and the rage of all the Jews and of all the devils combined. As He was pleased to redeem us with a plentiful Redemption, He did not consent to die by the sword, nor by any other weapon of steel that would take His life at a blow, in order that He might die, little by little, a death the most painful and difficult, the hardest of all deaths, on the gibbet of the cross. Therefore as He hears the cries, *Crucifige! Crucifige!* what satisfaction does it give to His loving desires! But we must always reflect, that in Him neither does the suffering diminish the satisfaction, nor does the satisfaction lessen the suffering. At one and the same time, He suffers and enjoys.

Ah, my Jesus! I am again shocked at the consideration

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 5.

of this point, that Thou shouldst feel consolation at the near approach of the time in which Thou art to be condemned to die on the cross for me. Whence this love for me that Thou shouldst for me even desire a death that causes horror? When I look into my own conscience I acknowledge that I am, on account of my sins, deserving of hatred and of being severely punished, and that Thou dost love me even so as to love torments and the ignominies of the cross for my love! Incomparable charity! But, oh, what terror and dread, that not even with all this canst Thou prevail on me to love Thee!

Whence, my soul, is this hardness toward Jesus, as if thou wast totally insensible? Whence comes it, that in thee are sentiments so opposite to His that He should rejoice in being reminded of this cross on which He is going to die for thee, and that thou shouldst complain and writhe at the thought of resolving to mortify thyself in anything for Him? I behold my disease. Who, but Thou, my Jesus! hast the power to cure it? Thou, who lovest to be loved by me, give me light to know Thee, help and strength to love Thee, with a love that may forcibly urge me to imitate Thee.

I shall say to my soul, *Crucifige! Crucifige!* If thou art sincerely resolved to love Jesus Christ thou must crucify thyself,—that is, thy own will, thy passions, thy senses.

III. Let us consider the cruelty of the Jews, because it may be of advantage to us. At the sight of Jesus Christ in that pitiable condition their angry minds are not in the least quieted; but, like a fire which little by little grows until it becomes a conflagration, their anger becomes more inflamed and they cry out, *Crucifige, crucifige eum!* They would say: "It is not enough that Jesus should be scourged; it is not enough that He should be crowned with thorns, reproached, disgraced; this is a trifling punishment compared with what He deserves. He must, moreover, be crucified." Thus it is with our passions; the more they are indulged the more insolent they become, and con-

tinually cry with the inordinate appetites, "It is not enough," until sin has reached the acme of malice.

Hence we may learn the necessity of resisting the movements of passion in their commencement. But, let us not leave Jesus Christ. See, my soul! how He stands, with His head bowed down, as debased as it is possible to be, before that multitude of people who yell out against Him, deride and insult Him. What affects Him is not the fear of death, for by His intrepid spirit He teaches us not to fear it; but it is, as the Prophet had said, the ingratitude of these unhappy Jews, who no longer remember the innumerable benefits of body and soul that they have received from Him and eagerly seek to have Him put to death, because, in their hearts, He is valued no more than if He were a beast.

But, O good Jesus! didst Thou not even at that time behold my ingratitude also? Yes, Thou didst see it. And oh! how much more painfully must this have pierced Thy Heart than that of the Jews, since the benefits that Thou hast conferred upon me are greater, and I am so forgetful of them that, instead of thanking Thee, I offend Thee. I accuse myself, O my Saviour! of my perfidy and villainy, and I dare not raise my eyes since I also have cried out by my sins, *Crucifige! Crucifige!* after being, with signal kindness, distinguished by Thee in a thousand loving ways. Concentrated in my own nothingness, I humble myself and crave Thy pardon.

I know that I am unworthy of it, for there is no one who is more undeserving of Thy mercy than I am,—a most ungrateful and most malicious sinner. But, in proportion as my unworthiness is greater, so will Thy goodness also appear greater; and I promise that with Thy assistance, mindful of my infinite obligations, I will be grateful to Thee in future, not only by offending Thee no more, but by loving Thee, obeying, and pleasing Thee every moment of my life. Ah, my Jesus, be it so, to Thy glory and to my eternal salvation!

My passions, similar to those of the Jews, make me rebellious and ungrateful to Jesus Christ. I can testify my

gratitude to Him in no better way than by mortifying them, without delay, for His love.

IV. Let us not hurry over this point; but pondering the exterior sufferings, as also the anguish of Jesus Christ, in being judged worthy of death at the very time when more than ever He should have been acknowledged worthy of compassion, let us strive the more to penetrate the spirit of His humility, which to us should be so much the more glorious as it is reputed more vile by the Jews and Gentiles. In our humility there is always some sort of necessity, through the knowledge we have of our vileness; but humility in Jesus Christ springs solely from His own will, for He humbles Himself to love abjection for our sake though fully conscious of His own excellence.

Behold, my soul! the admirable meekness of Jesus; for, whilst all are pouring forth reproaches and maledictions against Him, He renders to no one evil for evil. On the contrary, He entertains a merciful love for each of those who are raging and infuriated against Him, and to all that is said and done by the impulse of cruelty, He replies with acts of most ardent charity. Thus does He fulfil the Prophetic oracle, carrying to its last degree the most perfect humility in His submission to the dispensations of the divine Will.

But how, O Eternal Father! canst Thou permit that Thy Son, deserving of the benedictions and adorations of the whole world, should be execrated in this manner and pursued to death by these perfidious wretches? Ah! I do not understand the honor and glory which Thy Son gives Thee, in the midst of dishonors, by acts of the most sublime humility. At least, I ought to comprehend that all these humiliations have been ordained by Thee in punishment of my acts of pride; ordained for me, that I may learn to glorify Thee by humbling myself, and submitting to Thy holy will in the contradictions that befall me. Nevertheless how proud I still am, though I meditate on the humility of Jesus under the trials of so many insults and injuries! What must I say of this indomitable pride of mine?



O sovereign King, my most humble Saviour! who didst fortify my frailty by Thy humility, oh, do not deprive me of Thy helps! I am weak, most weak. I become impatient, uneasy, and troubled at the slightest adversity that happens to me. I am most delicate on the point of honor, insomuch that the shadow of disgrace suffices to terrify me. Ah, Thou power of God, my strength, imprint Thy example on me! I hope this will have the effect of making me abhor vain-glory, which I love, and make me love genuine humility, which I detest.

I shall reflect upon the occasions that may occur of my losing the esteem and confidence of those who have a good opinion of me. In all cases I shall prepare to practise patience, together with resignation to the will of God.

V. Jesus Christ hears His enemies cry, "Crucify, crucify Him!" Whilst the tumult of these sacrilegious words is resounding in His ears He is no way discomposed, and opens not His mouth either to complain or to justify Himself, but remains silent. If we consider the occasion for which He suffers, His charity is to be admired; if the manner in which He suffers, His humility; and in all the circumstances of His Passion, His patience. Three objects truly worthy of admiration, but that which we can best appreciate is His patience.

See, my soul! how Jesus Christ, so tormented and insulted, is not angry either with His Eternal Father, who has destined Him to suffer; nor with mankind, for whom He suffers; nor with the ungrateful Jews, who repay His benefits by so bitter a Passion. It may be known from His patient silence that He is the true God, conformably to the saying of the Prophet. For what manner of patience is that of God, in bearing and passing over so many and such continual offences that are committed in the world? Likewise what sort of patience is this of Jesus, in suffering so many outrages, so many insults, from all kinds of people? This must be a divine patience, the patience of a Man-God.

We should retain the image of it in our heart, to use it as a shield in all circumstances that may befall us contrary

to the desires of self-love. Let the whole world cry out against me, *Crucifige, crucifige eum!* The remembrance of the patience of Jesus Christ, in His pains and ignominies, shall be more than sufficient to restrain the movements of impatience. For here, more than elsewhere, in this Passion, and in this patience, does the soul clothe herself with marvelous fortitude.

O most loving, most humble, and most patient Jesus! I know the truth, but between knowing and practising it there is a vast distance; and, after having my understanding enlightened by Thy rays, I require that my will be also strengthened by Thy helps. Ah, Thou who art the example, the mirror of true patience, and who art, moreover, the reward and the crown of those that shall have practised patience for Thy love, give efficacy to my faith and hope, and then, whatsoever may occur my patience shall not be vanquished, encouraged by what I believe and hope. It is a sign that there is little faith, and little hope, when there is little patience.

Patience to mortify myself willingly. Patience to bear in peace the defects and contradictions of my neighbor. Patience to receive with thanksgiving the sufferings sent from God.

VI. As the Blessed Virgin had her heart entirely absorbed in the Passion of her most loving Son, we may piously believe that she was present when Pilate showed Jesus Christ, with the words *Ecce Homo!*<sup>1</sup> and heard the clamors of the Jews when they cried, *Crucifige, crucifige eum!*<sup>2</sup> With what grief may we imagine to ourselves her most sweet soul was pierced at the sight of the Man-God, whom she loved more than herself, in that deplorable condition, and also at the spectacle of the infuriated rage with which, by means of maledictions and blasphemies, they were seeking His death. Oh! how different for Mary is the scene of the crib, where the angels sang, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo!*<sup>3</sup> to celebrate the Nativity of Jesus, from the public square

(1) St. John xix, 5. (2) St. Mark xv, 14. (3) St. Luke ii, 14.

of Jerusalem, where the Jews cry out, desiring to see Him on the cross.

Contemplate, O my soul! the great Virgin Mother, in her affliction, worthy of our most tender compassion. What would she say at the first glance when she recognized her Son all wounds, from head to foot, with the crown of thorns, His hands bound, the reed in His hand, the cord around His neck, abashed and dishonored by so many insults and reproaches? Hindered by sobs, sighs, and tears, she is incapable of uttering a word, but still she speaks with her heart, and by acts, now of love, now of amazement, she gives vent to her grief. Her sorrow is on a par with her anxiety. Nevertheless, in so great an agitation of thoughts and affections, oh, what calmness is there within her, by her resignation to the divine Will! As at the Incarnation of the Word, so in the Passion, she repeats, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."<sup>1</sup> She adores the justice and the mercy of God, and instead of being roused to indignation, she humbles herself to venerate those ignominious torments which serve as instruments for the Redemption of the world.

O Mary! I compassionate the anguish of thy heart, and I admire the greatness of thy soul; but in considering the tears that flow from thy eyes, forced from them by the bitterness of thy grief, I reflect upon myself and I am confounded, for I know I am the cause of the Passion of thy Son by my sins. Acknowledging that tears are justly my portion, what a horrible thing it is that I have a heart so hard that I can not draw from it one single tear. Ah, dolorous Virgin! give me the tears that thou didst shed in the Passion of Jesus Christ, and I shall value more highly those tears of compassion than all the frivolous joys of the world.

From Mary I shall learn in my afflictions to resign myself to the divine Will. In this resignation we practise humility, which is the foundation of sanctity; and moreover charity, the crown and fulness of perfection.

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke i, 38.

## CHAPTER LIV.

## JESUS CHRIST DEFENDED BY PILATE AGAINST THE JEWS.

I. PILATE is astonished at the infuriated Jews, who are not in the least moved to compassionate an innocent Man, worthy of all compassion, and who grow only more savage and insist that He should be crucified. Moved to anger on beholding himself despised, and disappointed in his plans, he says to them in a sharp and irritated tone: *Take Him and crucify Him yourselves. I find no cause of death in Him.*<sup>1</sup> O divine Providence, how just art Thou! Jesus Christ has been brought to Pilate that He may be condemned, and it happens, on the contrary, that as many as four times he declares Him innocent.

The governor does not approve, but reprobates and detests the Jewish malignity, and perceiving that the treacherous wretches would make use of him as a minister for the execution of their iniquity, protests aloud that they may do as they please, and the injustice will be imputed to them, but that he does not consent to the crime. This moral honesty is praiseworthy,—not to do that which is evil to please any one whatsoever. But let us reflect on the malice of the Jews. They are guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by the act of crying, *Crucifige eum!*<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, they think that the fault will be imputed to Pilate, for they esteem themselves just and zealous because there is no human eye that sees their wicked passions of envy, anger, and hatred. They profess to live in the worship of a God who is the searcher of hearts, and they do not think at all of that God who is present with them and sees and discerns their bad intentions. Let us apply this reflection.

I also believe, O my God! that wherever I may be Thou dost wholly encompass and penetrate me, and by Thy power, Thy presence, and Thy very essence art within me more intimately than I am in myself. But how do I profit by this faith for the regulation of my conduct? If men could behold the deformity of my passions and of my intentions,

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke xxiii.      (<sup>2</sup>) St. Mark xv, 14.



what confusion and shame I should feel! Ah! Thou seest it, O my God! and yet I have no fear of Thy divine Majesty. I am more anxious not to appear culpable before the eyes of men than before Thine. O my God! who by Thy goodness hast given me faith, grant me also this favor, that I may exercise myself in my faith and make a good use of it. How shall it be possible that I should again offend Thee in any way, if I really believe that Thou, my eternal Judge, art always present with me?

I shall imagine to myself that in the world there is no one but God and myself, that I may fear and love Him alone, with my eyes fixed on the truth, without regard to all besides, which is but vanity.

II. The Jews seeing that Pilate makes no account of the accusation that Jesus had desired to make Himself king, soon produce another,—that He had made Himself the Son of God, and, therefore, that He could not escape death by the Law, which commands blasphemers to be put to death. This malice in thus recurring to the Law is inexcusable; for, if the Law states that the malefactor must not live and the innocent must not die, why not condemn the malefactor Barabbas, and liberate Jesus, who had been declared innocent?

It was already written that the Messiah was to be unjustly slain by the impious as the usurper of divine honors. But observe the perverseness of their injustice. After having said that Jesus Christ had made Himself the Son of God, why not relate also the wonderful works by which He had openly made Himself known for what He said He was? Why not enumerate the dead raised to life, the blind restored to sight, the lepers cleansed by one single omnipotent command of His? Treachery can not be more manifest.

But why, O good Jesus! Thou who desirest to be believed Man-God, why not now work at least one miracle in proof of Thy Divinity, having already wrought for this purpose so many others? Reflect, my soul, that all this is mysterious. Our Saviour is more solicitous to display His

patience than His omnipotence, because it is by patience that He is to work out our salvation. It is by patience, also, that we ourselves are to coöperate in our eternal salvation. It is particularly the virtue of patience, so necessary for the attainment of our eternal salvation, which He intended to merit for us in His bitter Passion.

O patience, virtue worthy of a God, and proper to Him! Virtue so precious and so dear to Jesus Christ, how much shouldst thou also be loved by me! I love and esteem thee, indeed, when I behold thee practised by others, but I know not how to love thee as my true good with a view to possessing thee. O most patient Jesus! I implore Thee to bestow this virtue upon me. I do not wish to suffer by force of pure necessity, for this would be the patience of a reprobate; but I beseech Thee to make me suffer in such a manner that I may love suffering for its own sake, and may love it through an ardent desire of imitating Thee, and of becoming like Thee, who hast loved to suffer so many sorrows and dishonors for me. In a few words, I ask Thee for that Christian patience which is the characteristic of the predestined, and which consists in suffering for Thy love, in return for that invincible patience which Thou hast exercised for my love throughout the whole course of Thy Passion.

I shall humble myself, with fear and trembling, acknowledging myself to be very far from the love of suffering. I shall humble myself, much more, from having reason to fear that even the very desire of this love consists entirely in words.

III. Pilate hears the accusation, that Jesus Christ has said that He is the Son of God, and he has no sooner heard it than he is overwhelmed with an undefined sense of fear. But behold, again, how Jewish malice is confounded by the providence of Heaven. The Jews have asserted that Jesus has blasphemed in calling Himself the Son of God, and Pilate begins to feel a doubt whether that which is called blasphemy be not perhaps the truth. The Jews wish that Jesus Christ, for having made Himself the Son of God,

should be condemned in virtue of the Law; and Pilate, not for the Law, which he does not know, but precisely for this, that Jesus has made Himself the Son of God, refrains from condemning Him. Pilate, being an idolater, knows nothing of the mysteries of the Divinity. Nevertheless, having heard, through fame, the wonders and virtues of this Man, it appears possible to him that He may be God, and for fear of incurring the indignation of a God he dares not put Him to death.

But while the judge and the people are disputing, what is Jesus Christ doing? He hears, and He is silent; and thus exercising the functions proper to a Man-God, He shows by what He suffers that He is Man, and by the virtue with which he suffers that He is God. Hence, Pilate, on beholding the patience of Jesus, which is more than human, becomes confirmed in his idea that He may be God. This excites apprehension, and he yields to fear.

Reflect, my soul! The simple fear that, perhaps, Jesus Christ may be God, suffices to restrain Pilate from consenting to put Him to death. How comes it, then, that we, who, by the light of holy faith, believe Him certainly to be God, fear Him so little; and that our fear is not sufficient to prevent our sins? Ah, my God! who is there to be found more blind or more unhappy than I? It seems to me, sometimes, that I love Thee, or at least desire to love Thee; but I deceive myself, for how can it be that there is even a spark of the love of God in my heart whilst there is not in it even the fear of God? To love Thee I must fear Thee, and fear is the first requisite Thou dost exact in order to dispose me to love.

My Jesus! take pity then on this Thy poor creature, who is destitute of the fear of God. Make me fear Thee to avoid offending Thee, make me fear Thee that I may love Thee, and save myself for all eternity. Truly, this is an immense grace, which I do not deserve; but if I do not merit the grace of fearing Thee, Thou deservest the honor of being feared. Therefore I beg of Thee Thy holy fear,

through that love which Thou hast for Thy glory, and for my eternal salvation.

Without desiring any sort of mystical union, of which I am unworthy, I shall endeavor to ground myself in humility and in the fear of God; thus shall I acquire grace, together with happiness.

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## CHAPTER LV.

### LAST EXAMINATION OF JESUS CHRIST AT THE TRIBUNAL OF PILATE.

I. PILATE fears that Jesus Christ may be God. His conscience makes him fear; for, having wrongfully inflicted on Him scourges and mockery, he justly fears that some severe punishment may fall upon him. Desiring, therefore, to form a clear judgment regarding the truth, he makes Him go with him to the Praetorium, to interrogate Him. Here he does not interrogate Him in order to make up his mind concerning the case as to what He has done, but only to know whence He comes. He asks, "Whence art Thou?"<sup>1</sup> to satisfy himself thoroughly whether He is a heavenly or an earthly Man. Thus it always happens, that he who does evil carries remorse and trouble in his conscience.

What answer does Jesus Christ give to this question? None. He does this, as well because the Prophecy has to be fulfilled that He is now to be like a dumb lamb, as because Pilate is unworthy of an answer for not having chosen in previous examinations to hear the truth from His mouth. This is God's manner of dealing,—to augment grace in him who faithfully corresponds with it, and likewise to refuse it to him who negligently and ungratefully will not profit by it.

This punishment is much more severe than is believed, and is frequently incurred, but never except through our own fault. At the hour of death we shall not be able to

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 9.



complain that grace was wanting to us on certain occasions, for we shall see that we have rejected and despised it in such and such circumstances. Graces are linked one with another. Often it is only necessary to correspond well with the first to have others afterward, and so to attain sanctity; and it only requires that some one grace be despised to be on that account deprived of many, and to fall into obduracy of heart.

This is a consoling, and, at the same time, an alarming truth! Consoling for the future, if I take care to value the divine inspirations, though they may regard little things, such as mortifying my body in a temptation of curiosity, in greediness, small passions, etc. Formidable as regards the past, since, as I remember that I have rejected a great number, who knows whether for this I am not suffered to remain in a fatal tepidity from which I shall never again arise?

I fear and tremble, O my God! and I feel my courage fail me to ask Thee again for any grace, for I am aware that I do not deserve it. I am a hundred thousand times more unworthy than Pilate. But alas! shall I also add this to my crimes, of judging my unworthiness greater than Thy infinite goodness? No, my most clement Saviour! I implore Thy mercy, and I offer in satisfaction to Thy justice the merits of Thy Passion. I beg of Thee to give me a strong assisting grace by which I may obey Thee in all the inspirations which it shall please Thee to grant me.

I shall receive every inspiration that either withdraws me from evil or conducts me to good as the last that God will send me. On this grace, perhaps, will depend my damnation if I resist, or my salvation if I promptly obey it.

II. When Jesus Christ is asked, "Whence art Thou?" that is, "Whose Son art Thou?" He answers nothing and keeps secret the mystery of His divine Sonship; which, being one of the sublimest and holiest of truths, must not be made known to the unworthy. But the governor, imagining that perhaps He replies not through want of respect for himself or through proud haughtiness, becomes very angry, as if insulted. Thus he imperiously vents his

spleen against Jesus Christ, to oblige Him to answer: "Speakest Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and that I have power to release Thee?"<sup>1</sup>

Let us reflect how Pilate, in the act of boasting that he has the power either to crucify or to liberate Jesus Christ, manifestly convicts himself of injustice. For if he has the power, why not discharge the Man whom he has ascertained and declared to be innocent? Why does he not exercise, in favor of Jesus Christ, that power which a short time previously he employed to liberate Barabbas, the malefactor? But do I not see that what I say of Pilate I have greater reason to say of myself?

I also have free will, which is like a governor who has the power of choosing good or evil; the power of sinning and of not sinning,—which is as much as to say, the power of offending or not offending God; the power of crucifying or not crucifying Jesus Christ. Having, likewise, by faith other lights to know the sanctity of this Man-God, do I not willingly condemn myself by using the power of my will to sin, and to offend Him, when I might use it to avoid sin and obey Him?

Ah, my God! by my own conscience, without further testimony, I am convicted as guilty of boundless malice. I accuse myself of the ill use I have made, and am continually making, of my free will. Whereas, it having been given to me that I might merit by adhering to reason and loving the beauty of virtue, I use it to my ruin, in following concupiscence and giving myself up a prey to the deformities of vice.

Of all the sins I commit the sole cause is my will, which abuses its liberty in consenting to what is wrong. It is of no use to throw the blame on my senses. They are nothing but ministers. It is the will alone that commands, and to this alone every evil must be attributed. But, O my God! I now resign to Thee my will, my liberty, my choice. Rule Thou me and check in me, by Thy grace, the power that I

(1) St. John xix, 10.

have for evil, that I may never commit it. Strengthen me to do good; then I shall do it, and I shall give to Thee the glory, and shall be indebted to Thee for it throughout eternity.

No one sins but he that wills it. No one is condemned but he that wills it. Ah! shall I use the power that I have to be the child of God to make myself a reprobate child of hell? I shall reflect whether this will turn to my advantage.

III. Before Pilate, who vainly glories in the power of giving life and death, what should Jesus Christ say, He who is so humble, that though He has dominion over all creatures on earth and in heaven, still looks upon Himself as nothing and as having nothing whereof to glory in? He is silent, He says not a word in His defence; but He can not remain silent when the honor of God must be defended. Therefore, hearing Pilate arrogantly attributing to himself a power that appertains to God, He thus, with dignity, reproves him: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Christ wishes us to learn that we ought not to boast of anything, for of ourselves we are miserable and every good that we possess is given us by God. He also wishes us to learn that whatever affliction happens to us ought to be received by us as ordained by God, not as caused by others; not even by the devil, who can do nothing without God's permission. But, above all, He is careful that it should be known that Pilate has no jurisdiction over Him, and that all that is done happens because He so permits it; nor could any one molest Him if He did not will it. He would have us know that He suffers neither by necessity nor force, in order that we may thereby comprehend that His Passion was a pure effect of His most merciful love.

Why so great anxiety, O Lord, to manifest to me Thy love! Each of Thy wounds tells me that it is there in order to oblige me to love Thee in return;—and is not this my duty? Yes, I love Thee, I love Thee, and I desire always to love Thee more, O my God! O happy lot, that I

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 11.

need not go to inquire what I am to do in order to love Thee, since Thou Thyself deignest to teach me! I know Thy commandments, Thy counsels, the virtues in which Thou desirest I should exercise myself; and since Thou givest me to understand that I shall truly love Thee when I live in the manner which Thou hast prescribed for me, thus I am determined to live.

My soul, reflect! As Jesus Christ is not satisfied with suffering, but is pleased that it should be known that He suffers for our love, so it is not sufficient for us to do what we should, but we must do it through love of Him. Therefore I shall obey not merely by the outward observance of the law, O my God! but with Thy help, which I implore, I shall obey for Thy love. I will have patience in adversity, and that for Thy love. I will be meek, charitable, modest; and, in all this, I shall have no other end but Thy love.

Until now how many good works have I done through routine, or human respect! I shall be careful, whether in doing good or in avoiding evil, to gain merit for myself in everything for the love of God.

IV. When Jesus Christ says that earthly power can do nothing to Him, and that all that is done to Him is by a divine dispensation, He does not excuse the malice of men as if they were not guilty of the injustice practised against Him. On the contrary, in order that Pilate may not deceive himself with the idea that he has no share in the sin, He adds: "Therefore, he that has delivered Me to thee, hath the greater sin."<sup>1</sup> By this the wicked judge may understand that though others have sinned more than he, he also has sinned by abuse of power, in not doing what he ought by setting the innocent free.

But, if in the Passion of Jesus Christ, Pilate has sinned less than others, who has sinned more? Certainly, Judas has sinned more, for he was the originator of the evil. The chief priests have sinned more,—through envy they delivered Him up to the secular power. The Jews have sinned

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 11.



more,—through hatred they cried *Crucifige!* But let us penetrate more deeply into the truth of this matter. Who, in this Passion, has sinned the most? Without doubt, of all those who coöperated in making Jesus Christ suffer, he sins most who does the most to destroy the merits of this same Passion and defeat the end for which Jesus suffered. For what end has Jesus Christ suffered but for the salvation of souls? More than all, then, may we say that those Christians sin who prevent the salvation of souls by scandal. This sin is beyond all others grievous, sacrilegious and horrible.

And how frequently has this sin been committed by me? Ah, my God! my scandals are so many that it is impossible for me to recollect them. The souls are innumerable to whom I have given scandal; sometimes by unlawful conversations, sometimes by bad advice, evil example, and perverse suggestions. I have then sinned the most grievously of all against Thee, O Saviour of souls! And how can I, the most malicious of sinners, hope in Thy Passion, which has been so often opposed by me with my scandals? Nevertheless, I hope because Thou willest that I should hope; and, contrite for all and each of those sins which I have caused others to commit, I ask pardon for them from Thy mercy. In future I will neither offend Thee again nor give occasion to any one to offend Thee.

It is but little to offend God no more, and not to cause Him to be offended. In penance for my scandals I will endeavor to bring back souls to God by good exhortations, good advice, and good example.

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## CHAPTER LVI.

### PILATE AGAIN ATTEMPTS THE LIBERATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. TWICE has Jesus Christ been questioned in this last examination. At the first interrogatory, He answered

nothing; at the second, He said a few words. Nevertheless, the holy Gospel states that Pilate immediately began to try again to liberate Jesus, that he might not be guilty of the death of an innocent Man who, his conscience told him, might perhaps be the Son of God.

But let us reflect for what reasons Pilate fears that Jesus may be God. In the first place, he fears because he has beheld Him silent in His own cause. And, in truth, if He had replied in His own defence, it might have been thought that He defended Himself through fear of death, and, therefore, He must be man. Since He kept silence, and by silence showed His invincible fortitude in despising death, there was reason to think that He was more than man, and that He was God. Pilate moreover fears that Jesus Christ is God because he has heard Him speak of a divine Majesty on which all human power depends. Here is something for us to admire, and at the same time to imitate. Jesus Christ, whether He speaks or remains silent, always endeavors, by virtuous impressions, to sanctify the name of God.

O worthy example! See, my soul! how edified Pilate is, both by the silence and by the words of Jesus Christ. Hence, learn the prudent caution and circumspection that thou shouldst practise with the tongue. I have great need of this Thy admonition, most sweet Saviour! because in my silence, as well as in my conversation, I have not an atom of discretion. My silence is almost always useless, my words are almost always useless; and scarcely ever does either my silence or my speech arise from virtue. How many times have I been idly silent, without at all considering the welfare of my neighbor! How often have I viciously spoken with boasting, slander, and duplicity! Ah, my God! I offer to Thee my tongue. Do Thou govern it, and grant, by Thy most holy grace, that, if it is silent, the silence may be virtuous; if it speaks, its words may be virtuous. May it never say anything that is an offence against Thee, nothing that may be hurtful to my neighbor. This is not sufficient. Do Thou move my tongue to speak

always of good things with fruit, especially in company and in conversation.

Out of the abundance of the heart the tongue speaks. Therefore I should fill my heart with holy maxims, holy thoughts, and holy affections, for in this way my words will breathe an odor of sanctity.

II. The Jews perceive that neither the appeal to their Law, nor the imputation of the crime that Jesus has made Himself the Son of God, makes the slightest impression on Pilate; and since, on the contrary, the judge is rather inclined to release Him, they commence to shout aloud, "If thou release this Man, thou art not Caesar's friend."<sup>1</sup> They are determined that Pilate shall yield willingly or by force, and as all other attempts fail, they try to intimidate him by holding out the threat of Caesar's displeasure.

However, one reflection must not be omitted. Pilate has never seen Jesus Christ work a miracle. He has only seen Him in the midst of ignominies. He has heard from Him only some few words, and he fears that He may be God; and through fear refrains from condemning Him. The Jews, on the contrary, after having frequently been spectators of His miracles and hearers of His heavenly doctrine, become more infuriated than ever in desiring that He may be condemned and put to death, for those reasons for which they ought precisely to adore Him. Behold verified in them the prophetic malediction, that they would reach a state in which they would no longer profit by what they should see and hear.

Thy judgments, O my God! are inscrutable and dreadful. Nevertheless, they are always right and just. It is true, that when a soul attains a certain degree of malice, Thou permittest that she should fall into a blindness, a deafness, a dryness, an insensibility which is fatal; since she no longer takes advantage of anything for her salvation. It is equally true, that pride is the cause for which Thou deprivest the soul of Thy gracious gifts. How much reason is there for me to fear that I also may bring myself, by

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 12.

my pride, to such a state, that those helps failing me by which Thou hast supported Thy elect, I may fall headlong from bad to worse with the reprobate?

This pride is not recognized by me, but though I do not know it, Thou knowest it, O my God! And oh, by the humility of Thy Passion, have mercy on me; do not regard my unworthiness, but my necessity. I am a poor sick man. My disease is my pride, and who can cure me, if not Thou, who art the Physician of my soul? O Jesus of Nazareth! I confide in Thee, and into Thy hands I abandon myself.

I shall fear that Jesus may withdraw His grace from me when I least expect it. I deserve this punishment. With this constant fear I shall subdue and conquer my pride.

III. Not in vain have the Evangelists left us a written record of the malignity of the Jews; since from that record we may also gather mysterious and salutary instructions. Let us observe the way in which they continued to calumniate Jesus Christ. They first put forth the accusation that He had made Himself king, and Pilate rejected it as frivolous. Then they bring forward the other, that He had made Himself the Son of God; and this one in like manner not being accepted, they return anew to the first, saying that having made Himself king, He is a rebel against Caesar. Whether by Jewish or by Roman law, they insist that Jesus is deserving of death; and that Pilate, if he has not the fear of God to move him to punish a blasphemer, shall have fear of Caesar, to make him punish a rebel.

For what purpose have these things been written, if not that to all may be known the Jewish perverseness of which Pilate himself was aware; and that it being known to all that Jesus Christ was wickedly calumniated, His innocence moreover may be made clear to all? But wherefore has Pilate been able to satisfy himself that all the accusations made were calumnies? O marvel worthy to be noted! With the semblance of zeal, the Jews speak powerfully against Jesus Christ; still, for all they say, Pilate is never persuaded that Jesus Christ is guilty. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, neither answers their calumnies nor defends



Himself, but is silent. His silence is so powerful that it moves Pilate to believe firmly that the Jews are wicked calumniators.

What an astounding lesson! It is not by defending oneself, but by acting rightly and by keeping silence, that innocence is most clearly brought to light amidst calumnies. I am no sooner aware that some one has detracted me, but my anger rises, and I yield to it. I can find no peace until I have exculpated and justified myself and made known to all the injustice of the persecution that I suffer. This is not the right way. No, under such circumstances a great talker is neither wise nor strong. I will then learn to be silent, and that not like a stoic, with secret haughtiness, but to be silent like a good Christian, with meek and modest humility.

But who can teach me this virtuous silence, if not Thou, O my adorable Saviour? Thy silence is a silence that speaks, that persuades and penetrates. Oh, speak by means of it to my heart! By the power of Thy example I hope to correct my unbridled loquaciousness. I shall imitate Thy humble silence, well convinced that I shall always be more tranquil and better satisfied with having held my peace in patience, than with having spoken ostentatiously in my own defence.

I shall conduct myself with the propriety becoming my condition, not through fear of detraction, but through love of virtue, and virtue will give me strength and courage to bear the detractions that shall be pronounced against me without my fault.

IV. Pilate, hearing himself menaced with the displeasure of the Roman emperor if he does not punish Jesus Christ, begins to experience some fear, and being unable to despise the law of Caesar, as he had a short time before despised the law of Moses, shows a disposition to use diligence in the discussion of the cause. Therefore, having conducted Jesus Christ again to the public balcony, he seats himself on the tribunal, as though he was going to proceed with the examination in the presence of all. But, behold! in a moment he changes his mind. Being persuaded that it is

vain to seek for guilt when innocence is manifest, instead of acting the judge he undertakes the office of advocate.

Shortly before, in showing Jesus Christ to the Jews, Pilate had said, "Behold the Man!"<sup>1</sup> to excite in them some feeling of compassion; now seeing that they lay the greatest stress on their accusation, that He had aspired to the kingdom of Judea, he says to them in a voice of reproach and mockery, "Behold your King!"<sup>2</sup> By this he would say: "Where is your common sense, in suspecting a Man so abject and so unlike a warrior should think of making Himself king? Look at Him, and you will understand how vain is your fear, and how false your accusation."

See, my soul! how Pilate in order to defend innocence, denies and combats truth. He says, it is not possible that Jesus Christ should be king. Still He is truly King, since from the moment that He became Incarnate, the Archangel Gabriel predicted that He should reign in the house of Jacob, and that of His kingdom there should be no end. Therefore, what a grief for the Saviour of the world, who is Truth itself, to hear that judge making His defence by advancing a falsehood!

O my Jesus! whilst Pilate treats Thee as a mock king, let it be granted me to acknowledge and adore Thee as my true King. Yes, Thou art my King; and since Thou hast said that Thy kingdom is within me, behold I open to Thee the gates, and I give to Thee the keys, that sin may no longer reign in me, but Thou alone mayest reign there by grace, throughout the length of my life, and also by glory for eternity. O happy me, if Thou deignest to reign in me! I shall assuredly reign also eternally with Thee, to contemplate the splendor of Thy countenance in the kingdom of Thy Father. Come then, come to me, O my King! and take from me, that is, from my soul, everything that can offend Thy most pure eyes; that Thou mayest reign therein with pleasure. To purify my soul, I beg of Thee, O Jesus! by the merits of Thy painful and opprobrious Passion, one perfect act of contrition.

(1) St. John xix, 5. (2) St. John xix, 14.

I shall listen to the voice of this King, who is within me, and to Him alone I will be obedient, and no longer to sensual concupiscence, which until now I have obeyed.

V. Pilate has scarcely shown Jesus Christ to the Jews to undeceive them, and to convince them that it is impossible that a man so poor and wretched can be ambitious to make Himself a king, when they all begin furiously to cry out: "Away with Him; away with Him; crucify Him!" O wonderful and horrible thing! It was the Jews who acknowledged Him before to be worthy of the kingdom, and sought to make Him king. The Jews are witnesses how far removed He is from a wish to usurp Caesar's kingdom, because of the virtues that He practised and taught. It was the Jews who having seen Him command the sea, the winds, diseases, devils, and death, confessed Him to be the divine Master. And these are the very same Jews who now hate Him to that degree that they can no longer endure Him. The same Jews who cry out with greater cruelty than ever, insisting on His death, and that upon a cross, as if He were an infamous criminal.

What sayest thou, my soul? If thou considerest the life thou hast led till now, at one time doing good, at another evil; at one time honoring, then offending God, canst thou not see in these Jews an image of thyself? Behold and hear the Eternal Father, who shows thee Jesus in the state in which Pilate showed Him to the Jews, and says to thee, "Behold thy King!"<sup>1</sup> Wilt thou also cry out against Him, and insist on His being nailed to the cross?

Ah, my adorable Saviour! on the contrary, I will cry out, "Live and live forever, my Sovereign King!" But my conscience reproaches me. How can it be that Jesus is my King, if I am not His subject? I belong indeed to the Christian religion, but how many Christians are there who, though they profess to be Thine, O my God! art not however Thine, because they neither honor nor obey Thee as they are bound to do? I fear to be one of these, and it is my tepid and deplorable life that makes me fear and

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 14.

greatly fear. I am numbered with Thine, but I am not indeed Thine; because I do not live as Thy children should live.

Therefore, O my Lord! permit me, a miserable sinner, to pray to Thee. Make me one of Thine, one of the elect, to whom, with the remission of their sins, thou likewise givest eternal salvation. Grant that I may be Thine, not in words, but in effect. And what must I do to be Thine? Dost Thou wish to know, my soul, what thou must do? Be obedient to Jesus in that which He has taught Thee by His holy word. Be faithful to Jesus, by imitating Him in His virtues, and above all, in His meekness and humility. Thus He will be thy King, and thou wilt be of His people, now and always, for eternal ages.

The kings of the world wish to be feared. Jesus alone, the King of kings, seeks to be loved. I shall thank Him that He deigns to allow Himself to be loved, and I shall implore Him to give me grace to employ my whole life in loving Him.

VI. Pilate sees how malignant the Jews are against Jesus Christ, hence he also fears to be spitefully accused by them at Caesar's tribunal. Nevertheless, he makes an effort to conquer fear, and to the clamors with which they cry out, like wild beasts, *Crucifige!*<sup>1</sup> he answers in a way calculated to reproach their blind perfidy, "Shall I crucify your king?"<sup>2</sup> that is, a Man so much esteemed by yourselves that you judged Him worthy to be your king. This the governor exclaims, with gravity, to make these impious men ashamed and to treat them with ignominy. By the ignominies of Jesus Christ, he has been unable to appease them; but they, far from being ashamed, repeat again and again, with insolent haughtiness, that they will have no other king but Caesar.

O sacrilegious cries! To reject the Messiah, the true Son of God and Lord of the universe, in order to be under the protection of a frail king of the earth. This cry was a stab to the Heart of Jesus Christ, from His great desire for the

(1) St. John xix, 15. (2) Ibid.



good of His beloved nation. He had already complained of it, with bitter sighs, by the mouth of His Prophets. It was, moreover, precisely on this account that to the same nation later on befell the predicted series of spiritual and temporal calamities.

I shall penetrate the deep sense of this point, for it is on this that my eternal destiny depends. My king is he that rules within me! And who is it that rules within me? O God! I feel in my heart a countless number of tyrants, each of whom contends for its dominion. Now pride assaults me, now envy, now avarice, now anger, now luxury, now sloth; and all the vices vie with one another to lord it over me. It is true, O my God! I sometimes by Thy help resist; but in the meantime I groan and fear, for courage fails me, and I grow faint in the combat. I acknowledge Thee, O most merciful Saviour! for my true God and absolute Lord, and I declare and profess that I have no other King than my Lord Jesus Christ. But how can I, vile, despicable wretch that I am, overcome so many of Thy enemies and mine?

Come, then, O my Jesus! and vanquish all these vices that fight in me and against me to usurp the dominion of my heart. Come and reign in me, for Thou alone art my King, my God, my Saviour! Take possession of my thoughts and affections, so that I may, above all things, delight in thinking of Thee, and may make acts of love to Thee, and never desire anything but what Thou wilt.

I shall repent of all those times, that like the Jews, I rejected Jesus, excluding Him entirely from me, by refusing to obey both His commandments and His counsels.

## CHAPTER LVII.

PILATE CONSENTS TO THE CONDEMNATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. PILATE did much to escape condemning Jesus Christ; publishing His innocence, contradicting the calumnies of the priests, and seeking by conciliation to mitigate their

rage and the tumult of the people. But after repeatedly supporting the rights of justice, at last overcome by importunate clamor, he yields; and forgetting all that he has said and done in Jesus Christ's defence, losing sight of wisdom and constancy, he agrees to the condemnation of the innocent Victim.

Nothing else could be expected from him. He had always shown too pliant a weakness in the fulfilment of his duties; without a heart to resist like a man the enemies of truth. This is what may, in like manner, be expected from any one who behaves in the service of God with tepidity and sloth. Lights and qualms of conscience are not wanting, as they were not wanting even to Pilate; but as with Pilate again, they are coldly corresponded with. Hence it is that first we waver and are inconstant in good. Afterward we fall insensibly into evil, and lose all merit even so far as to forfeit eternal salvation, which he only gains who perseveres in virtue to the end.

My God, how terrible are Thy eternal judgments! I can not without fear and trembling call to mind the examples of so very many who, after being exemplary in virtue, have fallen into vice, and have continued in vice, without ever rising again. And who knows whether so fatal a case will not be mine? I can not depend on myself, for I carry fragility and instability in my very nature. Nor can I promise myself anything from Thy grace, O my God! since this is a gift of Thine which at any given time may be denied me, without Thy doing me the least injustice. Who knows, then, that Thy grace may not, when I least think of it, abandon me, and that thus I may rush headlong from bad to worse? If this were to happen, I could never say that I had not deserved it. Therefore, while I entertain this fear, I fly to Thee, O my divine Saviour! and I beg of Thee to take from me that fear which might lead me to despair, and together with confidence in Thy mercy, to give me a holy dread of Thy justice, which may urge me on to good, withdraw me from evil, and keep me in humility.

I shall reflect on my wretched state of great tepidity. I shall ask of God for His assistance and grace worthily to correspond with His holy inspirations.

II. Pilate endeavors to liberate Jesus Christ, but languidly. His courage fails him to sustain truth and justice; his timidity increases in proportion as the audacity of the Jews increases. He fears Jesus Christ, and dares not condemn Him, saying: *What will become of me, if I put to death One who is the Son of God?* But if he does not condemn Him, he also fears the Jews, and asks with anxiety: *What will become of me, if they accuse me to Caesar?* Unhappy man, who against the fear of God puts, as it were, in a balance, a vain fear of men! He knows nothing of the Prophetic oracles, which warn us not to allow ourselves to be frightened by any one whoever it may be when we are called to stand courageously for God; but whilst he is wishing neither to condemn Jesus Christ, nor to offend the Jews, what else can be expected but that he will yield to human fear? This is precisely the outcome. He fears the Jews, therefore he does not resist them, but he yields to their violent demand for the condemnation of Jesus Christ.

Am I perhaps in this situation myself? My God! how many times have I, in order not to displease men, said and done things displeasing to Thee? On Pilate's principle, I wished, on the one side, not to offend Thy divine Majesty; but I would not, on the other, meet the ill-will of the world. What has been the consequence? Thus embarrassed between the fear of Thee and of the world, worldly fear has triumphed in me. I have listened to the tongues of libertines, and through fear of "*what will be said of me, if I make myself singular,*" I have yielded to the practice of irreverence in church, of detraction, of flattery, intemperance, and licentious freedom in company. I knew that I was obliged courageously to behave like a good Christian, and care nothing for being remarked or scoffed at; and yet the fear of the world has conquered me, and I have feared the world more than Thee.

Even now what a slave am I to human respect, contrary to the command given me in the Gospel, not to fear even one that should seek to kill me; and to fear only Thee who canst strike me in body and soul with temporal and eternal death. O my Lord, my Jesus! I accept the rebuke that Thou givest to my cowardice, for having feared the creature more than the Creator. I shall no longer be afraid of anything but sin. I shall fear Thy omnipotence, Thy justice, Thy anger; for who is there that can resist Thee? But oh! strengthen by Thy power my pusillanimous soul, so that nothing may again allure or divert me from seeking Thy glory on every occasion.

In examining myself, I discover a multitude of sins which I commit on account of my disposition, which is too accommodating and causes me to be led away with the feelings first of one, then of another. In this regard I shall strengthen my weakness.

III. Pilate fears being accused at Rome by the Jews if He allows Jesus Christ to go free; and, moreover, he fears not only that he may not, in that case, know how to justify himself, but that he may be deprived of his office. Whence springs his fear, if not from ambition? He loves his dignity to excess, his dignity of governor. Consequently, from fear of losing it, he readily turns from his duty and prefers his own interest to justice. Thus we may truly say that pride was the cause of the death of Jesus Christ.

It is pride in the chief priests of the Jews that makes them cry out, "Let Jesus Christ be crucified,"<sup>1</sup> for they fear that if He is liberated He will deprive them of the applause of the people and of their authority. It is pride also that inclines and urges Pilate to pass the unjust sentence. He would not have been so unjust if, instead of regarding Caesar as the source of his power, he had acknowledged it to spring from a dispensation of Heaven, as Our Saviour had told him. And it is that same pride which, after exerting its influence in the condemnation of Jesus

(1) St. John xix, 15.



Christ, contributes more than anything else to the damnation of souls.

Make me, O my God! comprehend well this truth, that every sin springs from inordinate love and fear. I love myself too much, and anxiously endeavor to gratify myself in every vain desire. And what else in reality is this love, if not pride, which, while it puffs me up, degrades and enervates me, so that I can scarcely any longer do the slightest violence to myself. I love praise, I love honors, pleasures and all that can be denominated my own interest. How frequently am I more afraid of losing the vanities, which I love and desire, than the fear that I should have of Thy infinite Majesty?

This spirit of pride with which I am possessed continually lays snares for me, so much the more pernicious, as they are more secret; but I know neither how to discern nor how to escape them. I only perceive that in proportion as my self-love burns more strongly within me, does the divine love grow colder. Ah, merciful Jesus! what remedy is there for my cowardice and misery? I would wish to fly with confidence to Thee; for who is there that is more worthy of mercy than a person who, like myself, is both miserable and proud?

Nevertheless, encouraged by Thy goodness, I wish to pray to Thee, and I do pray. I behold in Thy Heart medicine for my disease; that is, Thy humility. Ah! regard not my unworthiness; bestow upon me a little of Thy humility, which is so necessary for me.

Neither Pilate nor the Jews would have arrived at the enormous crime of putting to death the Son of God had they not considered pride to be of small consequence. I shall regard it as a very great evil, that I may fly it more than death.

IV. Pilate fears the fury of the people, and the displeasure of Caesar, and prejudice to his own interest, if he should set Jesus Christ free. What, then, will he do, in order to act uprightly and gain control over his feelings? It is the duty of a good judge to have the trial justly

conducted before he pronounces sentence. Therefore, why does he not endeavor to find proofs of the accusation and ascertain whether the presumed criminal be really guilty? To make oneself a king, soldiers, arms and money are requisite; where is there the slightest indication to justify the fear that Jesus wishes to make Himself king? He has only twelve Apostles,—uneducated persons. He lives a poor life. Even the house in which He dwells is not His own. The governor, stupefied and regardless of his obligations, makes no account of all this. A great fear overwhelms him, because intense pride blinds him.

Is not this what ordinarily happens? In proportion as pride increases in a soul, that heavenly grace which enlignens and inflames withdraws from it; so that, through its own fault, it remains in a frightful state of blindness and insensibility. The proud soul, wholly intent on its own interest, altogether neglects its duties; it no longer sees or loves what is right; no longer does it think of justice, conscience, or of God.

Unhappy state! and I clearly perceive that in describing the character of the proud Pilate, I represent my own character to myself. It is through pride alone that I daily fall into innumerable sins of omission and commission, and on account of it I may form to myself the most melancholy anticipations of falls and rises, irremediable and interminable. Therefore, since this causes me to dread everything that in any way looks like an offence against self, and perverts my judgment so as to fear nothing that is an offence against God, it is on account of this vice, if I do not labor to overcome it, that I may consider myself already placed among those sensual cowards who have precedence over all others in the catalogue of the reprobate.

Thou seest, O my God! how vain I am through the inordinate love I entertain for vanity; and as there is none but Thyself who can assist me, I turn to Thee, to implore Thee to have pity upon me. I entreat Thee to take from me this fatal love, so that I may no longer love vanity, but truth. Ah, most merciful Saviour! listen to my prayer. I

do not say, hear me because I deserve to be heard; for I should be too rash and too arrogant if I spoke thus. My confidence is entirely placed in Thy goodness, charity, and mercy, which are infinite; and it is on this account that I hope for and expect this grace from Thee.

If the divine grace is forfeited by pride, it is, on the other hand, maintained by humility. To be humble is to my advantage, and this is the virtue that ought to be the most loved and desired by me.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### JESUS CHRIST CONDEMNED TO DIE ON THE CROSS.

I. PILATE, seated on his tribunal, frees himself at last from all his perplexities, and finally makes up his mind to condemn Jesus Christ, notwithstanding the lights he has received, the remorse of his conscience, and the proofs he has had of His innocence. What drives him to so palpable an injustice? He has a political end in view; namely, to satisfy and tranquillize the people, and to avoid losing Caesar's favor. Thus write the Evangelists, that it may be known that Jesus Christ was innocent, and that there was no cause to condemn Him for any fault, and that He had to die for no other cause than the salvation of the world, as Caiphas had said.

Thus the unjust and cruel sentence is pronounced by the governor, that Jesus of Nazareth shall be put to death on the cross. In uttering it he trembles from head to foot, as if he were not a judge who condemns, but a criminal who is condemned. He is horrified, through a movement of nature itself, which can not endure that the God of life should be condemned to death. With all this, he neither repents nor corrects himself, but abuses the power he has from God, to sign and ratify deicide.

O blind and wicked judge! thy soul shall soon fall into the hands of that Man-God who is condemned by thee, and

thou wilt be judged by Him and condemned to hell. But why should I become exasperated against Pilate? Every time that I have sinned mortally, have I not also sentenced Jesus Christ to death, in spite of my faith and my remorse? Why, then, am I not angry with myself? In remembering my sins, I ought to conceive against myself so great a hatred as would never more allow me to be in peace with myself, since every sin of mine has come from loving myself inordinately. The penance that I deserve is to hate myself. Thus the saints acted. They hated so much their own will and their own flesh, since it is both by the one and the other that we sin, that they constantly fought against them by self-denial and mortification. Thus I also should do in order to satisfy the divine Majesty and assure my eternal salvation. Still, instead of hating myself, I love myself to such a degree that it can not be surpassed.

My God, who givest me light to know my obligations, give me moreover the strength to fulfil them. I am persuaded that this hatred of myself is necessary to vanquish my dominant self-love. But as this also is a supernatural gift, which must emanate from Thee, how can I of myself attempt it, or hope for it, without the special assistance of Thy grace. Every virtue, every power, comes from Thee, not from man. Therefore, humbly kneeling at the throne of Thy greatness and clemency, I implore it.

This self-hatred shall consist in interior and exterior mortification; for both one and the other are necessary for me, in order to satisfy for my sins, and to preserve me from those which I may yet commit.

II. The sentence of death having been pronounced against Jesus Christ in presence of all the Jewish magistrates, it is written out, and the multitude is ordered to be silent that it may be publicly read aloud and heard by all. The words are read in a loud, distinct voice, "Let Jesus of Nazareth be crucified,"<sup>1</sup> and the rage of the Jews changes at once into immense joy. They all cry out, "Huzza, huzza!" and congratulate one another upon the victory they

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix,



have obtained, running hither and thither to divulge it, as if it were an item of most joyful news. Pilate has sinned by being unjust. Moreover, his injustice must be chiefly attributed to the Jews; in addition to this, what cruelty and ferocity is it in them to find so much delight in the thought of an innocent man being condemned to so painful and infamous a death!

See, my soul, to what a deplorable state the only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father is reduced, the model of all that is innocent and just, that He should not only be condemned to death, but to a most hateful and terrible death. Condemned by a sentence in judgment, as if that death had been merited by Him. Condemned with universal delight and rejoicing, as if there had been question of delivering the city of a malefactor, the most seditious and scandalous in the world.

Let us place ourselves in opposition to the Jews; and while they, blinded by malice, rejoice in impiety, let us exclaim with affections of admiration and compunction: Then is Jesus condemned for our sins! For our sins is Jesus, the Son of the Most High, condemned to death! He in whom are contained the most precious treasures of grace and of the wisdom of God! Let us reflect well, my soul, what this means, that a God without sin has been condemned to death for sin, and by serious reflection, let us excite ourselves to contrition. O my most sweet Jesus! how deeply it grieves me to have sinned; that is to say, to have offended Thee, who art so good a God; and to have offended Thee for vain and transitory things of no account whatever! to have offended Thee, while on account of Thy immense goodness and loveliness, I was bound to love Thee supremely! I repent, and I am sorry for it, with my whole heart; and I wish that I had never done it, but now I am resolved never to sin again. I adore and bless and thank Thy infinite mercy. I abhor and detest my wretched malice, and I beg of Thee to assist me to destroy and annihilate sin by true repentance, through Thy most holy grace.

I shall offer to Jesus Christ my hard heart, that He may make it penitent, humble, and contrite. Moreover, I shall implore of Him, by all His sorrows and merits, and by the sorrows and merits of Mary, His Virgin Mother, this immense favor.

III. Jesus Christ stands before Pilate's tribunal in the condition of a criminal, while the sentence of His death is read. On hearing it, who could describe the affliction of His most tender Heart? Having taken on Himself the weakness of our nature, it can not be doubted that He suffered that torment and trembling and distress which those generally experience who are condemned to die on the gibbet, and this much more, through His exceeding sensibility of feeling. But in the superior portion of His soul, in His reason, what magnanimous intrepidity is His? He seeks not to escape death; but, on the contrary, to meet it, as being about to conquer it.

He might plead His reasons, He might complain of the injustice, might expostulate and appeal, but He does not do this. When, on one occasion, the Jews turned against Him with stones, He asked them why they wished to stone Him? And now He does not ask why they choose to crucify Him? He offers no opposition, but is silent. He is angry neither with Pilate nor with the Jews. On the contrary, He pities them. Though the sentence is unjust, He accepts it willingly, and consents that it should be executed; because He is conscious that He has not to die for His own crimes, but for those of others.

Behold, my soul, how marvelously we see united in Jesus Christ the misery of man and the sublime power of God! He is a God, who has come to redeem proud man by abjection. But remark how things are arranged, that in the manner of this Redemption, the Majesty of the Redeemer may in no degree be degraded. It is in this Man-God that the divine wisdom has deigned to give us an example by which justly to regulate our life. But in meditating on the humility, the meekness, the patience, with which He receives the sentence of His death, to deliver us from the

sentence of an eternal death, from this example, in which He exercises the most sublime virtues, while suffering the loss of His life and of all that is most dear to Him, what can we learn?

Ah, my Jesus! if it happens that a wrong or an affront is inflicted on me, of this occasion, ordained by Thee to humble me, and make me resemble Thee, I make use to break forth into acts of pride, anger, and scandal, to Thy displeasure. Ah! may it please Thee, O my God! to strengthen me with Thy perfect spirit, by which I may be confirmed in the purpose of imitating Thee, and may love Thy honor more than my own; love more to give pleasure and satisfaction to Thee than to my own sensual appetites. May my glory be the power of glorifying Thee, by bearing the adversities which Thy loving providence may send me; not so much to punish as to mortify and to save me.

This is a hard saying, that it is necessary to bear dishonor with humility; but it will become sweet and easy if I remember Jesus, who endured to be hated as an infamous man, in being sentenced to the cross.

IV. All the circumstances of the condemnation of Jesus Christ, by means of Pilate and the Jews, the oppressors of justice, truth, and innocence, must be considered as an effect of the divine plan for the completion of the work of the world's Redemption. They are Jews and Gentiles, who condemn Him to die on the cross; but the decree of this death was already passed in heaven from all eternity. It was the Eternal Father, who, moved by mercy, gave up His Son as a victim to death, in order to satisfy His justice. It was also the Son, who approved the heavenly sentence, and filled with love for the Father and for us, offered Himself of His own will to death.

If Jesus Christ had willed, He might have ordained in many ways that no one should have conspired for His death; but He preferred submitting to what was pre-ordained, and making Himself the Victim of charity and obedience. This deserves our admiration, praise, and thanksgiving. O Eternal Father! how greatly am I in-

debted to Thy mercy, since to give life to me, a vile sinner, Thou hast condemned Thy most holy Son to death! How much am I obliged, O Eternal Son, to Thy love, seeing Thee so willingly accept the sentence to be crucified for me! How much also am I indebted to Thee for Thy example by which Thou showest me how I am to save myself, whilst by Thy obedience Thou art meriting my salvation!

But when shall I begin, O my Jesus! really to return Thy love, principally by imitating Thee in Thy obedience? Of this virtue I have immense need. I can obey in those things that suit my inclination; but in those that are contrary to my opinion, my humor, or my sensual appetite, what excuses do I not allege in order to be dispensed! What complaints, in refusing to bend my stiff neck!

O most sweet Jesus! when I behold Thee bend with reverence Thy divine head to the sentence of Pilate—a man without faith or justice—and with prompt obedience venerate in his power the supreme authority of the Father, I learn with what submission I ought to obey my superiors, whoever they may be, considering them always as holding Thy place. I also learn the necessity I have of Thy grace, to discipline my spirit, so proud and rebellious. This is the grace that I ask of Thee, O Eternal Father, through the merits of that obedience with which Jesus Christ has infinitely honored Thee, the grace to obey, and to renounce my will, in submission to Thine, and for Thy love.

I shall examine what superiors, and on what occasions I have most difficulty in obeying, and I shall form my resolution of obedience by reflecting whom Jesus obeys and in what He obeys.

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## CHAPTER LIX.

### JESUS CHRIST TAKES THE CROSS ON HIS SHOULDERS.

I. WHEN the sentence has been read, Jesus Christ is immediately consigned to the Jews, that they may proceed to His crucifixion when they please; and the poor Victim,



according to the words of the Prophet, is in their hands like a tender lamb in the jaws of an infuriated lion; like a village in the power of a cruel, victorious enemy. They would devour Him alive, if they could; and they impatiently long for His death. Hastily they prepare the cross. In the meantime, one abuses Him; another strikes Him; a third spits on Him; and He receives in peace every affront, giving up of His own free will to the indiscretion of His enemies, both His reputation and His life.

They then remove the purple garment that He had on; but not the crown of thorns, which is left where it was, during the remainder of His Passion, that His pain may in nothing be diminished. What sayest thou, my soul, on beholding Jesus Christ again exposed to so impetuous a torrent of insults? The more the Jews see Him suffering and abased, the more they mock Him. But what are His sentiments?

Can these mysteries be meditated upon without compunction, without humiliation? Oh! for faith, faith to firmly believe that Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, who has had for me an exceeding love, and has given Himself up into the hands of His enemies, to suffer in all manner of ways for me. What means "for me?" It means, to save me. Ah, with this faith must we not admire the love, admire the patience, admire the humility of a King reducing Himself to such a condition for the salvation of a slave? A God doing so for the salvation of man? The Creator for the salvation of the creature? The Innocent for the salvation of the sinner?

O most loving Jesus! O most patient Jesus! O most humble Jesus! to how much does Thy love oblige me; to how much does Thy example bind me? In return for Thy love, I will love Thee; and I will always love Thee more in return for Thy patience, through which while going to death, Thou dost not seek comforts, but art pleased to go crowned with thorns. I resolve to mortify in myself the inclination I have for a life of pleasure, and the aversion I have for suffering. In return for Thy humility, I resolve to

imitate it by bearing the evil words which shall be spoken against me, since Thou hast especially merited by them for me the grace of courage.

I shall reflect on these resolutions, and for the practical fulfilment of them, I will distrust myself entirely, placing all my confidence in God alone, and interposing the intercession of the most blessed Virgin.

II. Stripped of the purple robe of ignominy which He had on, Jesus Christ is left naked. Being naked is more ignominious a torment since He is in the presence of an innumerable crowd assembled there to behold and mock Him, as an infamous Man, condemned to the gibbet of the cross. He is commanded to put on again His own tunic, that in the streets, when He is being led to death, He may be more easily recognized by all. Is He not worthy, in this painful confusion, to be compassionated by us, with most tender affection?

Behold, my soul! this Man who in the quality of man is the most noble, the most innocent, the most loving of all men; who was, moreover, a short time ago, the most beautiful and the most graceful of all; see how He is now mangled and disfigured, with His flesh blackened by so many wounds, and by coagulated blood. What a trial for a person so modest, and honored, in the flower of His age to be stripped publicly, exposed to the eyes of these insolent wretches, with the character of a malefactor, worse than the street assassins!

Let us now consider who is this Man, and remark that He is true God, whose august Majesty is immense, eternal, and incomprehensible. Ah! what condescension in a God, to have deigned to abase himself to the lowest degree of vileness, the nearest approach to mere nothing, as if He were a criminal deserving of punishment for His wickedness. But why did He choose to suffer this nakedness, so disgraceful to Him?

I understand, O my Jesus, Thou brightness of eternal light, in the refinement of Thy love, Thou willest that this time again I should behold Thee naked that I may see

better, in every part of Thy most pure body, what Thou hast suffered for me; how much Thou hast suffered in Thy most innocent flesh to save my most wicked flesh! Yes, I see, O my Redemption, my Mercy, my Salvation! I praise and thank Thee; and because I know not in what manner to praise Thee, nor to thank Thee, either as I should, or to the extent that I ought, I beg Thee to supply for me, and compensate for all my tepidity with Thy merits.

Give fervor to my heart, to excite me to a return of love to One who so greatly loves me. Give me the spirit to admire and imitate Thy humility which fills the angels with amazement, and the devils with terror. O my Redeemer! I see how much Thou hast suffered for my love, and this is and shall always be the only object of my most fervent prayers: that Thy plentiful Redemption may not be useless to me. I shall reflect on the inconstancy of my resolutions, of which I make many every day, but do not fulfil even one of them. I shall humble and recommend myself to Thee in my necessities.

III. The blessed Jesus being clothed anew with His tunic, after the Jews have satiated themselves with loading Him with insults, they lead Him out into the public street, where the cross is ready. And if the instruments of death are concealed, as far as possible, from others who are going to be put to death, through some sort of compassion, that their affliction may not be increased by the sight of them: to Jesus is presented without pity that cross to which He is to be nailed, that at the painful sight of it His soul may be crucified before His body is crucified.

Ah! if He fell into an agony in the garden, on representing to Himself the cross at a distance, what will He do now that He has it palpably before His eyes? But since this same cross has also been the object of His ardent desires, insomuch that He was painfully eager and panting in the expectation of dying on it, for the salvation of the world, what joy also may we believe He experiences, now that He beholds it ready, after having desired it for three and thirty years?

Reflect, my soul! on the great horror and the immense love that Jesus Christ has for the cross. By a movement of nature His feelings are terrified and afflicted, while by the force of His charity His courageous spirit rejoices. How can it be that we can love what we fear, and that the cross which is a sorrow can bring joy? In Jesus Christ we have an example of this. He loves the cross, though it is painful to Him, because He regards it as glorious to the **Eternal Father** and advantageous to us; as an instrument of our salvation; as a key, which will open for us an immense treasure of every good. He loves the cross, because **He** loves us; and what doubt is there that the cross will also be lovely to us if we love Him?

O most amiable Jesus! worthy spectacle of compassion and of imitation for me! I compassionate Thee in Thy most bitter anguish; but how can I imitate Thee in Thy joy? I am altogether averse to voluntary suffering. When I foresee that some cross is about to come in my way, instead of preparing myself to await it and meet it virtuously, I wholly apply myself to think how I can manage to evade it. Ah, my God! if I had a little love for Thee, as Thou hast so much for me, how sweet and delightful would every cross be to me? I have an aversion to the cross, because the love of the flesh and of the world has dominion over me. Grant, O Lord! that I may love Thee, then I shall also love the cross, even so far as to make it my pleasure and my glory.

I shall persevere in asking for divine love, since the true reason for my loving sensuality and disliking suffering is this: I make profession of loving Jesus Christ, and in truth I do not love Him.

IV. Jesus Christ takes the cross in His arms, as if it were presented to Him by His **Eternal Father**. He kisses it and presses it to His breast, saluting it as His delight and His treasure, because He has to accomplish upon it satisfaction for all our sins, which He has appropriated to Himself, as if they were His own. Then with alacrity He



places it on His shoulders, in order to set out toward Calvary.

But let us reflect on this mystery. At the moment that Jesus Christ touched the cross with His deified Humanity, it instantly derived a divine virtue from the contact. It became immediately venerable to earth and to Heaven, terrible to the powers of hell. As long as the cross was in the hands of the executioners, there were about it a multitude of devils, enemies of our salvation; but on the instant that it was in the hands of Jesus Christ, they all fled away in terror and went headlong into hell. They who had been the first to swell with pride against God were the first to be humbled by the cross.

Having in this manner considered the mystery, let us fall prostrate, O my soul! to adore the holy cross, recognizing in it the remedy intended to heal all our evils, and to obtain for us all good,—spiritual, temporal, and eternal. For the cross of Jesus Christ let us entertain sentiments of esteem, reverence, and love. Remembering that it shall appear on the Day of Judgment, for the consolation of the elect, and the terror of the reprobate, let us look upon it with fear, and now implore mercy through it, that we may profit by what Jesus Christ has suffered on it; that it may not then provoke His justice against us. Most holy Cross! consecrated by the loving kisses and embraces of the Son of God made Man, destined to serve as an altar for that most precious Sacrifice that is offered to the divine Majesty, for the Redemption of the world, I profoundly adore and salute Thee, and I beg of Thee now to be a place of refuge and a mediator of mercy for me, that I may avail myself of those graces that Jesus Christ has merited for me by His bitter Passion. I will not act like Adam, who, after having sinned, sought to fly from God and hid himself beneath the tree of the terrestrial Paradise. I have sinned and I do not fly. On the contrary, I take refuge and I am penitent under Thy shade, O true Tree of Life! because I find my God who loves and calls me and offers me pardon. Ah, venerable and most holy Cross! through that love with

which Jesus Christ embraces Thee, grant that a sincere spirit of penance may be bestowed upon me, by which I may dispose myself for the remission of my sins.

I shall be devout to the sign of the cross, for the sake of what it represents, and by faith I shall make good use of it to obtain graces and blessings in all my actions, especially against temptations.

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## CHAPTER LX.

### JESUS CHRIST GOES WITH THE CROSS TO CALVARY.

I. THE Jews make haste to put Jesus Christ to death, for fear that Pilate may alter the sentence he has pronounced; but it is Jesus Himself who, with fervent charity, ordains that they should hasten, on account of the eager desire He has to accelerate our salvation by His death. Immediately, therefore, the two thieves, who are already condemned, are led forth to be executed with Him, in order that being thus accompanied by malefactors, He also may be considered by all as a malefactor. This had been foretold by Our Saviour, and the truth of the prophecy is now fulfilled.

The trumpets sound, and a confused cry is heard, as if of joy or mirth; and then the journey to Calvary is arranged. One thief goes before, another follows behind, and Jesus Christ is in the middle. Each has his cross; but Jesus Christ, though His face can no longer be recognized, as it is all covered with filth and disfigured, is discerned by His usual dress, which is put on Him that He may be pointed at by all.

Behold, my soul, thy Lord led forth, like another Abel, to be assassinated by His brother Cain. Like another Isaac, who is going to be sacrificed on the mountain. From the company of those thieves, which is assigned Him, draw reflections on the greatness of His ignominy and confusion. Oh, how different is His escort now, from that which five

days ago accompanied Him, carrying branches of olive in His honor! Then He was proclaimed king, now He is reputed a thief.

But what fruit shall I draw, O my Jesus! from beholding Thee between two thieves? I see these men, though guilty, without a thought of grieving for their crimes; they grieve only for the punishment that follows them. I see Thee, who, being innocent, lovest exceedingly the punishment, through the exceeding hatred which Thou hast for sin; and for sins that are not Thine, Thou willingly acceptest the cross. They carry it by force; Thou, through love. Am I an imitator of Thee or of the thieves?

I have sentiment enough to grieve over every adversity that befalls me, but to any grief for my sins I am utterly insensible. A trifling difficulty afflicts me and goes to my heart; while with regard to the multitude of offences that I have committed against Thy divine Majesty, O my God! my heart remains quite calm, and feels not the slightest pain. What is this but to imitate the two thieves, not to imitate Thee? Ah! give me a new heart, most merciful Jesus! and grant that I may no longer grieve over the crosses, but over the sins. Give me a sincere hatred of sin, and a true love of the cross; so that I may willingly carry the cross in imitation of Thee in penance for my sins.

Crosses are not wanting in this life. I shall be careful not to carry them like the thieves, through necessity, without merit. I will rather bear them for the love of God in imitation of Jesus Christ.

II. In this journey through the city to Mount Calvary, we must consider how Jesus Christ behaves, and moreover how the Jews behave. Jesus, much fatigued and weakened by so many blows and all the ill-usage He has undergone; by the quantity of blood that He has shed; with His shoulders lacerated by the scourges; and His sinews full of pain, so that He can scarcely stand; exerts Himself to the utmost to carry the gibbet of the cross. But how often the cross strikes against the crown of thorns and causes Him excruciating pangs! How many times, quite overcome, panting

for breath, He falls down and yields to the weight! O what patience He displays! And who is there to compassionate Him?

Instead of assistance, He receives from the executioners blows, kicks, and insults. Some in front pull Him forward with ropes, which they have tied around His waist and His neck. Others in the rear drive Him on with sticks and spears; some fall on Him with blows and reproaches, insulting and blaspheming Him. O spectacle such as has never elsewhere been seen or heard of! The impious wretches laugh and exult at beholding Him become the sport of the rabble; in lieu of a sceptre, carrying the beam for His execution; and they say, "Learn what it is to make Thyself a king!"<sup>1</sup> With eyes of devotion and faith, let us admire the sublime mystery; in what manner the cross, which was esteemed disgrace and dishonor, is now the glory of religion!

Much more, O my soul! let us admire the charity of Jesus, which beams forth under the cross, in His suffering so many outrages and insults for our eternal salvation. Let us keep Him company with acts of admiration, and still more with sentiments of compassion; for what son, on hearing it said, "Thy father is being led to the scaffold by officers of justice," could help sighing, sobbing and weeping?

O Jesus, the most loving and the most amiable of all fathers, my true Father, and more than Father, from whom I have my being, movement, and life! Certainly, it appears to me, that if I had been in Jerusalem and had beheld Thee, I could not, for the mere feeling of humanity, have been a tearless spectator of Thy many sufferings and ignominies. Would that I had had the happiness of being present at Thy Passion! But how is it that now, with the light of faith, I meditate upon it, with a hard heart and with dry eyes? Ah, my most sweet Saviour! make me enter into the feeling of Thy pains, Thy charity, and patience, that I may be moved to compassionate Thee; and

(1) St. John xix.



compassionating Thee, may love Thee; and loving Thee, may be excited by love to imitate Thee. It is Thou who inspirest me to pray to Thee in this manner. Therefore, have the mercy to give me a favorable hearing.

I shall resolve upon some particular act of humility, of patience, or of charity; these being the virtues which Jesus Christ, beneath the burden of His cross, especially recommends to my imitation.

III. The cross that Jesus Christ carries with unspeakable meekness and patience, is long, thick and heavy. Let us penetrate the mystery herein enclosed. In taking the cross on His shoulders, He has taken all our sins upon Himself. This is an undoubted article of faith; and when we say our sins, we understand the sins of the whole world. Consequently, as He carries in the cross a world of sins, oh! how much more is He afflicted on account of the heavy burden of these, than of the cross?

As there was neither man nor angel who had strength to take up so vast a load, it is true that for our salvation He spontaneously offered Himself to carry it. Notwithstanding, what fatigue and anguish does He suffer, beneath so many iniquities of every description? It is principally of this that He complains by the mouth of the Prophet, saying that sinners have raised up a high, long fabric on His shoulders.

Pause here awhile, my soul, and reflect how much weight thou hast added to the cross of Jesus Christ by thy sins. It is inexpressibly heavy, on account of the sins of the whole human race; but it would have been less heavy if thy sins had not been there to increase the weight. Reflect well what thy sins are, in their number, their kind and their circumstances, as well of those committed by thyself, as those thou hast caused in others. Oh, what terror! If in the world there had been no other sins but thine, how heavy would the cross of Jesus Christ have been with thine only. Thou art too hard-hearted, too cruel, my soul, if this thought does not move thee to compassion and contrition.

Oh, yes! most patient Jesus! I do compassionate Thee in

the distress and pain which Thou sufferest, not so much beneath the cross of wood, as under that of my sins. The Jews have done little in Thy Passion in comparison with what I have done. It is I, I, who, by my wickedness, load and crush Thee down most grievously and make Thee groan and sigh. And who will give tears to my eyes, to weep night and day over my malice? If the Jews have merited one hell, I deserve a thousand. But, ah, regard not, O Lord! my sins but myself, who, though I am the least of all, have been created by Thee—redeemed by Thee. Take pity on me, and exercise upon me Thy mercies, not Thy vengeance. I will never more offend Thee. I have resolved to keep Thy holy Commandments, and I promise Thee that I shall keep them inviolably. But what am I saying about resolutions and inviolable promises? Blind and miserable wretch that I am! in what can I be sure of myself in my state as man, who is like grass, which flourishes, and soon fades; and like a shadow in the sun's rays, which never remains stationary? I ought to say that I shall never offend Thee again, O my God! with the help of Thy grace, which I beg of Thee, through the merits of Thy holy Passion, not to refuse me.

I shall draw the conclusion, how great and terrible an evil sin is, since being laid upon the Son of God made Man, it caused Him such intense anguish and distress. I will repeat the act of contrition.

IV. The news having gone forth of the condemnation of Jesus Christ, the streets through which He passes are crowded with people. Every one abhors Him and speaks against Him, and no one comprehends the mystery. Of those very persons who lately applauded His glorious actions, some say with pleasure: "It is all right that this good-for-nothing fellow should be punished;" others exclaim in surprise: "Who would have thought that He was a wicked man, He who appeared so holy?" Again others followed Him with curiosity to see Him perhaps work some miracles. What confusion for Him to behold Himself in such strangely altered circumstances. A short time pre-

viously, so honored and blessed even by children; now so despised and accursed by all, through the infamy and malediction which He bears in the cross.

Enter, my soul, with reverent mind, into the interior of Jesus and see how He, the Fountain of all benediction, is content to be thus accursed. With what immense love for the Eternal Father does He humble Himself to suffer this ignominy for His glory! With how great love for us does He take upon Himself all these maledictions to deliver us from the temporal and eternal malediction which we have merited by our sins! Having His mind set upon this sole object—the accomplishing of the world's Redemption—He pays no attention to what is said of Him; He has no human respect; He makes no account of the confusion, and goes cheerfully onward with the cross. Oh, what joy is in His Heart! This is so marvelous in the divine displeasure that each suffering increases the joy of His charity; though by this joy His sense of pain is in no manner diminished.

I lose myself in the abyss of Thy mysteries, O my Saviour! In the meantime, I do not think of profiting by Thy example. Oh, what an excellent lesson is this for me! Thou art not ashamed to be seen by all with the crown of thorns on Thy head and a cross on Thy shoulders, like a criminal between two thieves; because Thou thinkest of nothing but of obeying Thy heavenly Father in the work of my Redemption. But do I follow this example? Not unfrequently am I ashamed of appearing obedient, sometimes to Thy precepts; at others, to Thy counsels. I fear to debase myself by patience, modesty, and humility. I know not how to bear even a slight for Thy love, and readily yield to every shadow of human respect.

Vile, worthless coward that I am! Ah, my Jesus! strengthen me by Thy strong sweetness, that I may be never more ashamed to carry the cross of Christian observance. Thy cross consists in doing what I ought, and I will do it cheerfully. It consists moreover in suffering what it pleases Thee that I should suffer; I will suffer without repugnance.

But whether it be doing or suffering, nothing except Thy love can make it sweet to me.

I shall reflect on what appears difficult to me in obeying the will of God, and on what occasions human respect has the greatest ascendancy over me; and I will come to an efficacious resolution on some particular points.

V. Let us with reverence approach Jesus Christ, to ask Him whither He is going with that cross, and for what purpose. And He will answer, that He is performing an act of obedience, and is going to set up this tree in opposition to the other, by which Adam, through disobedience, sinned. O charity, O wisdom, worthy of a God, and proper only to a God! Adam tasted the fruit of that tree, which was to us the tree of death; and God, with an eye of compassion, has chosen the tree of the cross, that it may be for us the tree of life. The devil made use of a tree to ruin the world, and now Jesus Christ makes use of a tree to save it. He goes to pay on a tree the debt contracted by means of a tree. He makes a remedy of the same material whence the poison issued, and triumphs over the infernal enemy with the same weapon with which the wicked one had first conquered.

See, my soul, and admire the charity of Jesus, who, though the scourges and the thorns would have sufficed to make our Redemption plentiful, has willed also to suffer the cross. See and admire His wisdom, by which He makes use of the cross, as the most vile thing in the world, to perform the most magnificent of His undertakings; that is, our eternal salvation. See, how with His eyes raised to His Father, He protests that the mysteries of His cross are hidden from the proud, and revealed only to the humble. Thus it is. In the cross are contained the mysteries of truth, of sanctity, and of every happiness; but they are not understood except by one who is humble. I at least should understand this; if I comprehend little or nothing of the Passion of Jesus Christ, it is owing to my pride alone. I understand something of the exterior Passion, that it is which most strikes the imagination; but I understand noth-



ing of the virtue of the Passion, which is concealed from the proud.

My Jesus! who didst once give sight to a blind man, by putting mire upon his eyes, enlighten me also in the same manner, making me humble by the knowledge of my miseries. Meanwhile, blind as I am, I deplore my wickedness, and while, on the one hand, I reflect how much Thou art doing, and how Thou art laboring to accomplish the work of my salvation; and, on the other hand, how much I am doing and laboring to destroy it, I am astounded and exclaim: "How is this, that instead of coöperating with the merits of Thy Passion, by imitating Thy virtues, I, on the contrary, render them useless to myself by my vicious life?" Where one builds and another destroys, what is gained? My Jesus, my God! prevent me in this ruinous work. I ask of Thee humility, which is the first fruit of Thy cross. If I gain this, everything will be gained.

If I reap no other fruit from this meditation, let me at least learn that it is on account of my pride that I profit by nothing. I shall detest this vice, reflecting what lights and flames would be kindled in me, if I were humble.

VI. One of the most acute sufferings that Jesus Christ had to endure in going to Calvary, we may believe was the meeting with His most blessed Mother. She was carried away by her love and by her grief, overwhelmed with sorrow, regardless either of the crowd or of the soldiers. She is waiting for Him outside the city, and she can scarcely support the delay till He arrives. She hears the blasphemies as they approach, and the blows they inflict upon Him to hasten Him on the way, and at last she sees Him coming, crowned with thorns, bearing His cross, between two thieves, bound and dragged without pity or discretion. O Mary! how is it that thy soul was not torn from thy body at such a sight? The eyes of the Mother and of the Son meet; and unable to speak a word to each other, on account of the eagerness with which the Jews are hurrying on, they converse heart to heart.

My soul, what should we hear, if we could listen to the

voice of these hearts? "Dear Son," Mary says, "O my dear Son!" "Dear Mother," says Jesus, "O my dear Mother!" In saying this, the two hearts are so closely united and so penetrated by a mutual veneration of compassion, that one can scarcely be distinguished from the other. They communicate their griefs reciprocally; and one takes those of the other, without either being deprived of that which is its own. Mary feels all the sorrow of Jesus; and Jesus experiences all the grief of Mary. O new cross! O new dolorous Passion!

I know, O my Jesus! that Thy Heart is exceedingly great; but since It is so full of bitter afflictions, how canst Thou receive into It that flood of tormenting anguish which is poured into It from the heart of Thy Mother? I am not capable of understanding these secrets; but if my mind can not comprehend them, how is it that I have not a heart to pity? O Mary! where art thou? I behold thee absorbed in the Passion of thy Son, and as in this state I behold thee overflowing with mercy, in that thou art thus afflicted for miserable sinners, I humbly entreat thee to soften by thy mercy my poor heart, that it may shed over the suffering Jesus, along with thee, at least one tear of sympathy.

Impart to my soul the compassionate sentiments of thine, that I may worthily sympathize with thy Son. O happy me! if I could enter with thee into a partnership of sorrow! I value more one drop of thy sorrows than the whole torrent of worldly delights. Look well, my soul! first at Jesus, then at Mary; and entering into their intense afflictions caused by my sins, give vent to devout emotions of mingled compassion and contrition. Oh, how sorrowful is Jesus! Oh, how sorrowful is Mary! But how much more sorrowful are both the one and the other for my sins than for all the rest of His painful Passion!

I shall reproach myself for my want of devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. I shall resolve to accompany her, and imitate her in following the different phases of the Passion, recommending myself to her intercession.

## CHAPTER LXI.

## JESUS CHRIST ASSISTED BY THE CYRENEAN TO CARRY HIS CROSS.

I. THE Jews, perceiving that Jesus Christ, through fatigue and grief, is quite overcome and falls to the ground from time to time, oppressed with the heavy weight He has to bear, resolve to lighten it by calling some one to assist Him in carrying His cross. This is not done through pity, but through cruelty; because, in the first place, they fear that He may perchance die on the road, and they do not wish to see Him die any other than the ignominious death of the cross. Then, in the second place, being so heavily loaded, He goes too slowly, and they have a savage eagerness to crucify Him as quickly as possible.

Therefore, they seek for some one to assist Him. But no one is to be found. With abhorrence all refuse, not only to carry the cross, but even to touch it, as this is considered a public sign of infamy. The Jews refuse to help Him, because they think that in doing so they would share in a malediction, by having any communication with a condemned man. The Gentiles also refuse, looking on it as a dishonor to put their hand to the cross, as one would feel with respect to a gibbet. His disciples are dispersed through fear, and no one knows where they are. So that, as so many thousands surrounding Him hold back, perceiving a stranger in the city, from Cyrene, by force they stop him and oblige him to place himself beneath the cross, behind the poor Sufferer.

My soul! compassionate thy Saviour, so sorrowful, so distressed and abandoned; and reflect how this scene is continually enacted again and again in the world. When there is question of suffering for Jesus Christ, what pretexts, what excuses does the sensual appetite invent? Every man of the world flies the cross and is an enemy to it; some through pride, others through sloth. But let us not go out of our way to examine what others do; but let us attend to ourselves.

My Jesus! what is my confusion in seeing that Thou willingly bearest this heavy cross, which is due to me by my sins, and that, at the same time, Thou beholdest in me excessive fear of every cross however light and trifling it may be, and my unwillingness to carry it for Thy love. Ah, Thou who art God, Lord of the universe! dost carry for me that cross of immense suffering, and I, vile wretch! who am but a handful of dust drawn from nothing, will not go out of my way to suffer anything for Thee. What pride, to value myself more than Thee! To esteem my flesh and the world more than Thee! In order to become worthy of Thy mercy, O my God! I confess my sinful misery. Oh, help me by Thy holy grace, and give me a new spirit, a spirit of strength, that I may no longer have a horror, but rather a love for the cross. It is impossible that I should have a sincere love for Thee, so long as I love not Thy cross also.

A resolution to bear the cross with Jesus Christ. I shall reflect that every mortification, whether interior or exterior, that is practised for Jesus Christ, is the cross of Jesus Christ.

II. From the time that Jesus Christ delivered Himself into the hands of His enemies, He has, until the present, willed to be alone in all His sufferings. On this account, when He was apprehended in the garden, He commanded that His Apostles should be free, that He might be alone amidst both the torments and the insults. He had no need of companions to assist Him in redeeming the world, as He had no need of them to create it. It is only in carrying the cross that He admits of company; and it is not by chance that the Cyrenean has joined Him, but by a high counsel and mystery.

Jesus Christ is Man and at the same time God. The Divinity never having been separated from the Humanity, it is certain that He could by a miracle have given to His wearied body strength and vigor to carry the cross as far as Calvary, without further assistance. Although He wrought miracles to sustain the weakness of His flesh, that He might



not die of suffering either under the strokes of the scourges or by the pain of the sharp thorns, He works no miracle beneath the load of the cross, and gives way as a person in need of succor. Thus does He invite each one of His faithful followers to carry it, and repeats, by His example, what He has already said to all, that whoever will come after Him must carry the cross.

Reflect, my soul, how Jesus Christ desires that we should bear Him company in suffering under the cross, through the wish that He has that we should moreover be His companions in the enjoyment of His glory. To carry the cross with Him is not for us a counsel; it is a necessity, if we would be saved.

Thus has God ordained in His eternal decrees that we are to serve Him both by bravely offering our shoulders to bear the cross, and by bearing it with a willing heart for His love. Nevertheless, what do we do?

I render thanks to Thee, O my Jesus! for the love with which Thou deignest to receive me into the company of Thy elect, who carry the cross with Thee. And how can I ever again entertain an aversion for the cross, when I bear in mind this sweet thought, that under the cross of afflictions and sufferings Thou art always with me? Thou consolest me by telling me that the way of the cross will end, but that that most blessed glory, which Thou hast promised me, will never end. However greatly my delicacy may complain of the cross, oh! how charmingly does hope refresh my mind? But I have need, O Lord! of Thy love; because without it, what cross can be of the slightest use to any one, for the obtaining of an eternal reward! Unhappy me! how many crosses have I heretofore carried without merit; because I have carried them without reflection, neither to obey Thee nor to please Thee, O my God! Give me strength that I may have patience in crosses, and give me also a willing heart to carry them constantly for Thy love. Be they crosses of necessity, which it may please Thee to send me, or of my own choice as Thou mayest be

pleased to inspire me, grant that I may submit willingly to all for Thy love.

If I had been present when some one was looked for to assist Jesus Christ in carrying the cross, methinks that I should have willingly offered myself. I shall now offer myself; and my disposition will be acceptable to Jesus.

III. I shall represent Jesus Christ to myself as my King, who in the cross bears the ensign of His new kingdom. The princes of the world have as their emblem of greatness either the diadem on their head or the sceptre in their hands. Jesus Christ has the cross on His shoulders. The Prophets had said that the Messiah should bear His government upon His shoulder; and that His power should not consist in gold, but in a tree. The prophecies have been perfectly fulfilled. By the cross, He has subjugated hell and triumphed over His enemies, and extended the kingdom of His Church militant and triumphant.

Behold then, O my soul! thy King, who on the road to Calvary goes before, and turns around to let us know by His words and example that he who will follow Him must carry the cross with Him. He constrains no one, but invites; He does not invite some only, but all—ecclesiastics and seculars, high and low. He declares that for our salvation it is not sufficient that He should carry His cross; but our coöperation is necessary in carrying ours for ourselves as well.

Who will not admire the merciful justice and the just mercy of God? Jesus Christ has satisfied for us to the utmost rigor of justice, and has applied to us all His merits. He requires nothing of us except that we also should follow Him with our cross. Could He have done more for us, or exacted less from us, that we might gain His heavenly kingdom, not on the ground of mercy only, but moreover by right of justice? What cross can be so heavy for us as His was for Him?

O my Jesus, how good art Thou, to be willing to bring me into Paradise at so small a cost! When all things are well considered, I see that the cross which I carry in order

to go to hell is very much heavier than that which Thou layest on me to guide me to heaven. Ambition, envy, hatred, vengeance, luxury, gluttony, and so many other evil passions of mine, I can not deny to be crosses of pain and suffering to me, and to what end am I tending with them, but to an eternity of despair? On the contrary, I know that humility, charity, chastity, temperance, patience, and so many other lovely virtues are sweeter and lighter crosses. Moreover, by following them, I am convinced that I shall attain to a blessed eternity. Still what madness to prefer rather to damn myself with painful crosses, than to save myself with those that are sweet? O my King and my God! may Thy grace come to me with its unction and strength, to carry me away, and I shall follow Thee everywhere with the crosses of the Gospel.

I shall ask of Jesus His love, as all depends on that. I have no difficulty in carrying the crosses of the flesh and of the world, because I love the flesh and the world. I shall also carry the cross of Jesus Christ, if I love Jesus Christ.

IV. The Cyrenean, beholding himself forced to carry the cross of Jesus Christ, complains at first and resists and bears it unwillingly on account of the dishonor and the violence which the Jews unjustly do him. But scarcely has he touched that sacred tree, than feeling himself both enlightened in his mind by a celestial light, and strengthened in his heart by a sovereign virtue, his thoughts and feelings are suddenly changed. Obedient to grace, he places himself beneath the cross, with a holy patience. He humbly reckons himself unworthy of it, and carries it with love and merit; so that it appears to him there exists not in all the world a tree equal to it in charming sweetness.

Thus it happens to any one who knows how to make use of faith, to believe the treasures that are contained in the cross; or of hope, to expect the treasures that have been promised to us by the cross. Every affliction is changed into joy, and no pain is experienced from that which is done for love. But I am anxious, my soul, that this word—the cross—should be understood by thee. What is it to

carry the cross of Jesus Christ? Nothing else than to mortify the depraved tendency of our affections and of our senses, and especially of our proud self-love. I shall apply myself to the reformation of the old man, by self-denial; and to laboring for the acquisition of virtues. I shall always esteem more the eternal goods of heaven than the perishable joys of the world. In prosperity I shall keep my soul prepared to bear adversity with resignation to the divine Will.

This language is hard, but it is true. For our encouragement, can we say that the example of Jesus is of small account, as He goes forward with His cross to animate us? Shall we call little the reward of eternal bliss, which will be bestowed upon him that shall carry his cross as a Christian? My soul! thou wouldst desire to have the suffering today, and the reward tomorrow; but be in no hurry; let thy hope be accompanied with patience, and the reward is certain.

Ah, my God! all this is good, all true; but I distrust in myself the rebellion of the senses, which can not be reconciled to the cross. Bad habits have so weakened and enervated me that I have scarcely any vigor left to tread the road of virtue, and Thou seest the extreme need I have of Thy grace. Ah, then, my Jesus! Thou, who hast promised me glory if I follow Thee with the cross, Thou, who even when I do not follow Thee, so mercifully waitest for me, grant me the gift of Thy love, that by it I may love Thy cross also. Cause me to obtain what Thou causest me to desire. I know that Thou, the God of strength, dost not abandon but dost comfort him that hopes in Thee. In Thee I shall trust, in Thee I do trust, O my King and my God!

It is not sufficient to carry the cross, but we must also follow Jesus Christ. To this end, I shall give my utmost attention, for in many things I mortify myself through human motives, and the love of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with it.



## CHAPTER LXII.

## JESUS CHRIST PITIED BY THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

I. As Jesus Christ proceeds on His way with His cross to Calvary, a great multitude of people follow; some to deride, others to pity Him. Among them are a few women, who are tenderly moved and weep to see Him so ill-treated, worse than the two thieves. Jesus Christ raises up, as if He were not the sufferer whom they commiserate, and turning to them says, with an intrepid voice, that they should not mourn and weep for Him.

Behold, my soul! how Jesus on the way sheds blood from His wounds; but He will not allow tears to be shed for Him. He thus makes Himself known for what He is. "Why weep for Me, O My daughters!" He would exclaim, "since this is the day of My royal magnificence, the day of My nuptials, of My joys. I come to bring to the world, with this cross, universal gladness. He who is led to die by force is an object of tears; but to Me, who die by My own will, compassion is not due, but rather admiration, because if I die, I shall soon rise again, triumph over death, and destroy the very author of death which is sin."

O my Jesus! nevertheless, how immensely does Thy gladness cost Thy Humanity! But how ardent must be the charity of Thy Heart, since so many impetuous torrents of suffering and ignominies are not only inadequate to extinguish it, but rather inflame it more and more! Thou goest, it is true, voluntarily to death, with the full power of laying down and of taking up again Thy life. How is it that on this account Thou dost not choose that others should weep for Thee amid the torments and insults that Thou art made to suffer?

I admire and praise the excess of Thy great charity, and I offer Thee in thanksgiving all the glory and all the benedictions that are given Thee, by all creatures on earth and in heaven. Ah! let me weep, or rather I should say, make me weep over Thy Passion, and so weep with loving tender-

ness that I may rejoice to shed tears for Thee, as Thou rejoicest to shed Thy blood for me.

Oh, how delicious is that sweetness that is felt in weeping for Thy sacred Passion! He knows it who experiences it. I implore Thee to give me also some little taste of it that I may feel myself excited always to love Thee more and more by thus reasoning with myself: If it is so sweet to weep in this life for Thee, what shall it be, O my Jesus! to enjoy Thee in life eternal? If it is sweet to suffer for Thee, what shall it be to rejoice in Thee, and with Thee in Thy glory?

With acts of humility I shall consider myself unworthy of Thy divine consolations; and if it please Our Lord to give me any, I shall resolve to make a good use of them; that is, by keeping alive the spirit of devotion and prayer by their means.

II. Jesus Christ under the cross desires that all should see the vastness of His unparalleled sorrows, that His patience also being apparent, He may appear to all an object worthy of compassion. Nevertheless, He tells the women not to weep over Him; not because He is displeased to be commiserated, but to give us to understand that His Passion is not so much a matter to be wept over as is the cause of that Passion, which is sin. That there is not so much reason to weep over Him who suffers; that is, over the Saviour, as over him for whom He suffers; namely, the sinner. Therefore, He adds that they had better weep for themselves and for their children.

Jesus Christ seeks and waits for some one to pity Him in His sufferings, but He desires that he should have the same motive in pitying as He has in suffering. He suffers for our sins; and it is with our attention fixed on these that He should be commiserated. "Weep, then," He seems to say to us also, "weep not for Me, as if I were going to die for Myself, but because I am going to die for you, in satisfaction for the iniquities that have been committed by you. I commend the love that you bear Me, but you should rather have zeal for your own souls, and those of your neigh-

bors. For after all, the sufferings that I endure for sin have an end; whereas the pains that are impending over sinners will be eternal."

Let us reflect on the object of our zeal, which must be sin; and also on the order that Jesus Christ prescribes for us to observe. For in telling the women to weep, in the first place, over themselves and, then, over their children, He moreover gives us the lesson that before we exercise zeal toward others, we must first direct it to ourselves, carefully examining ourselves. To whom is this admonition more properly addressed than to me? Who is more miserable than a wretch who has not sense enough to grieve over his own miseries? Such a one am I, ready to make a show of zeal for others; while I have no zeal for myself, who am the most vicious of all. I behold motes in the eyes of others, and I do not see beams in my own. Various slight defects in others, I regard as grievous; and how many sins do I commit in which there is indeed serious matter, but which I pass over as things of no consequence? I wish to see others repent and amend, and I take no pains about my own repentance and amendment. I hear, O my Jesus! Thy voice, saying to my heart that I ought to weep over my own soul. But ah! Thou who knowest my infirmity and hast a remedy for it, in mercy apply it. By Thy holy love, there is a remedy for everything; and this is all the good that I can desire for my soul; namely, to please Thee, to obey Thee, and to live to Thee in Thy love for all eternity.

This is the order of charity and zeal by which I should render the Passion of Jesus Christ fruitful to myself before others. I shall imprint on my mind this lesson, given me by my Saviour in His journey to Calvary.

III. Jesus Christ perceiving the pity that these women feel for Him, is moved also with compassion for them; and though their commonplace tears are of little value, as springing from nature, not from faith, nevertheless, He accepts them graciously. Out of regard for that sorrow which has the character of humility, He rewards their com-

passion by placing before them motives to excite compunction in their hearts.

"My Passion," He says, "is far, far less a subject of lamentation than those persons who do not profit by that Passion. My Passion will be more hurtful to you than to Me, if while I suffer so much for the satisfaction of your sins, you will not do penance for these same sins. Your perfidy shall be punished by an eternity of torments. A time shall come, My children, that will be for sinners a time of mourning, calamity and despair; and blessed shall he be that shall have taken care to mortify himself. Weep not, therefore, on seeing Me go to death in the character of Redeemer. Weep for the time when I shall come with the majesty of an inexorable Judge to exercise My severity."

Come, my soul, and learn how immense is the mercy of thy Saviour, since though He is oppressed in body and mind and soul, by such heavy sorrows, as if forgetful of Himself, He applies Himself entirely to render His Passion efficacious for the salvation of those souls who pity Him, giving them the most powerful admonitions and inspirations that He possesses in the treasury of His infinite wisdom. Every tender affection of ours is exceedingly precious to the suffering Jesus, but as our thoughts on the Passion ought not to stop at a sterile feeling of compassion, without coming to imitation, this is the method we must follow.

What shall become of me, O my Redeemer! in Thy tremendous judgment, if I do not profit by Thy example? By following Thee with the cross, bearing adversities and mortifying myself for Thy love, I am certain that I shall be saved. But by rejecting the cross and following my sensual appetites and the customs of the world, what can I expect but to be numbered with those despairing souls, of whom Thou hast said, that in hell they shall call upon death, and shall never be able to die? I see that from Thy Passion, simply on account of my sloth, I draw no fruit whatever. Therefore, I fear that I shall be damned. Instead of advancing in virtue, I have done nothing until this present time but multiply my sins. My God, filled with



confusion I throw myself prostrate on the ground, to cry for mercy. I beg of Thee to give me a share in that grace which Thou hast merited for me, and by which Thou seest not only that I shall be able to coöperate, but that I shall in effect coöperate with Thy sacred Passion.

I shall frequently remember, that on imitating or not imitating Jesus Christ depends the question, whether my last things,—death, judgment, and eternity, are to be consoling or terrible.

IV. Let us contemplate Jesus Christ speaking as He does to the daughters of Jerusalem, not with a feeble voice like a man of sorrows, but with sustained emphasis, as if He were preaching in the Temple. Does it appear as though He were on His way to die, and that only one half hour remains for Him before He will be crucified? He utters not a word of complaint for Himself, not a word of sympathy for His afflicted Mother. All zeal and charity, He does nothing but exhort these unhappy souls to do penance for their sins, that they may be delivered from eternal torments.

“Look at Me well, dear souls,” He says, “and reflect on yourselves. For if I am punished with so much severity for sins not My own, what shall be done to you for sins that are yours indeed? The Day of Judgment will come without fail, and you shall be judged with severity if you have not availed yourselves of My merits to obtain pardon. If the fire of the divine wrath is so active in consuming My innocent Humanity, that resembles a green plant, what havoc will it make of you who are dry wood, without the sap or fruit of any sort of virtue?”

These words of Jesus Christ are terrible for every one who has sinned, and who does not bring forth fruits of penance. Either penance or hell. This is the sermon that He preaches to us whilst scourged, crowned with thorns, loaded with ignominies, He goes with His cross to Calvary. To oblige us to do penance, He shows us His wounds, what mercy is doing for us, and what His justice will one day do. It will not profit us to calculate in this manner: Jesus has

suffered for my salvation, therefore, I shall be saved without further trouble; because all that He has suffered in His holy flesh will not suffice to purge away my iniquity if I remain impenitent.

Ah, my Jesus! who will not admire Thy boundless charity, by which not content with suffering so much for me, Thou laborest so ardently to make Thy Passion efficacious to me? I see what Thou endurest, and I foresee what I shall have to suffer for eternity, if I do not look after myself.

But what shall I do, who am indeed dry wood, good for nothing? I humble myself before Thee, O my God! who alone hast the power to cause the most barren of trees to blossom and to fructify. Give me strength to perform with gladness the penance that Thou inspirest me to do. If I knew that the sacrifice of my life would be acceptable to Thee, I would by Thy grace offer it to Thee; but since I know that what pleases Thee the most of all, as being more worthy of Thee, is contrition of heart, behold me here grieving and repentant for having offended Thee. Satisfy Thy justice, O Eternal Father! by the Passion of Jesus Christ, and by His merits, grant that I may unite myself to Him in the spirit that He has united Himself to me—in my flesh. May I become intimately united to Him by love, as He through love, has deigned to unite Himself to me.

I shall resolve to repeat frequent acts of contrition; and in penance for my sins, to bear the sufferings of this world. Moreover, I shall inflict some especial mortification on my senses.

## CHAPTER LXIII.

### JESUS CHRIST WITH HIS CROSS ARRIVES AT CALVARY.

I. THE Jews, knowing the efficacy of Jesus Christ's words, and fearing that by His discourse the crowd may be aroused to set Him free, hasten Him on, with insults and blows. But his charity urges and hastens Him on still more; so that finally, with incredible efforts, He arrives at

the summit of the mountain whither as a figure of this identical sacrifice Isaac also had been led. Oh, what an affliction to the flesh to behold the place of His death! But oh! what joy at the same time to His spirit, to see the spot on which He is about to accomplish the Redemption of the world! Calvary is an accursed mountain, infamous on account of the malefactors who are wont to be punished there. However, He calls it the holy mount of God, and gives it a thousand benedictions, because it is chosen for His exaltation and His glory.

There is nothing in the Passion of Jesus Christ which is not willed and then arranged by Himself. Therefore, He chooses for His death Calvary, which is in the middle of the world, in order that the whole world may serve as a temple for the altar of the cross on which He has to offer the sacrifice of His life; and to diffuse its virtue not through one nation only, but through the entire human race. But we may also say that Jesus Christ has in this way been pleased to make His humility appear together with His charity, by choosing for His death a vile place, reserved for condemned criminals, as He had selected a vile stable of beasts for His birth.

My soul, how many beautiful things are contained in the Passion of Jesus Christ! It suffices to ascend to Calvary in order to discover there an infinity of mysteries. But who is the man, O Lord! worthy to ascend to the holy mountain, but he who is pure and clean, and practised in virtue? This at least is requisite, that we may carry the cross with Thee. And how can I be admitted with Thee to Calvary if I have no less an aversion to Thy cross than had Thy executioners? I am one of the many who think they can follow Thee, without the inconvenience of suffering; persuaded that, provided they do not wantonly offend Thee, perfection consists in the prudence of self-love without efforts for the acquisition of virtues that are painful to the flesh. Oh, how greatly are these persons deceived, and how am I also deceived with them!

O my divine Master! grant me a little of Thy humility

by which I may know myself thoroughly, for if I come to know myself for what I am, a monster of malice, an unhappy sinner deserving of hell, who ought to be in hell suffering all manner of torments, for the sins I have committed, what mortification or humiliation is there that will be difficult to me? What cross that will not even be lovely to me? To him who has lived as a sinner, penance is not of counsel, but of precept.

The thought of hell is powerful, but still more so is this reflection, which I shall make familiar to myself: Whatever I may suffer, what is it all compared to the sufferings of Jesus Christ? All my suffering amounts to nothing when placed in the balance with His.

II. As soon as Jesus Christ has reached Calvary the cross is removed from His shoulders, and all crowd around Him in confusion, both Jews and Gentiles, to insult Him, some in one way, some in another. Each one thinks it fair to inflict what cruelty suggests, and our divine Redeemer does not resist, the Divinity taking no part in the scene except to support Him, until that final moment when He shall cease to breathe.

As it was the custom to give the condemned some refreshment to uphold them in their pains, the two thieves have pure wine given them to drink, but to Jesus Christ wine is given mixed with gall. They make a show of compassion for Him in His fatigue and fainting, but it is all done in order to mock at Him and torment Him the more, pretending pity so as to indulge cruelty. Observe, my soul, how Jesus Christ being tortured in all parts except His tongue and in His bowels, gall is given to Him to render Him in every sense of the word a Man of Sorrows. The Prophets had foretold this also, that the Messiah should be fed with gall by His beloved people. And does it not seem to thee, my soul, that He deserves to be commiserated, when for His refreshment so bitter and nauseous a beverage is given Him? Why, then, dost thou not keep company with Him in the bitterness of His sorrow with bitter tears?

Were tears in my power, assuredly, O my Jesus! I would



wish to do nothing but weep in contemplating Thy Passion. But as I have no tears, I give Thee at least what I have,—a feeling of sympathy and compassion, such as I may, in seeing Thee become for me a fool, so derided in Thy wisdom, for a wretch like me, so embittered in Thy sweetness. What else is this wine, which is given Thee mixed with gall, but my faith which is spoiled by my wicked life? What, except the Sacraments and prayer, which I offer Thee with tepidity and sloth? What but the good works which I perform with unworthy intentions of vain-glory, envy, and hypocrisy? In this gall which embitters Thy mouth, I especially recognize my sins of gluttony; seeking, as I do, in eating and drinking, more to satisfy my sensuality than my necessity. Behold, O King of glory! my wickedness, through which shines with the more splendor Thy most loving kindness. I grieve for my ingratitude, since in so many of Thy graces, and principally in the Adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist, Thou givest me honey, and in return, I give Thee gall. Ah! overcome my malice by Thy goodness, and through that most bitter gall, which Thou tastest, make me taste the precious sweets of Thy love.

I shall call to mind the gall given to Jesus, when I take my food, in order to mortify the sensuality of the appetite. In order that my actions may be without gall, I shall take care that every action shall be good in itself, and shall, moreover, be performed with a good intention.

III. Jesus Christ puts His blessed lips to the cup of wine and gall that is presented to Him; but He has scarcely tasted it when He turns aside and refuses to drink it, preferring rather to suffer thirst, distress, and faintness, than to avail Himself of so cruel a refreshment. It is not that He refuses the disgusting liquor to avoid its painful bitterness, for He swallows enough of it to poison His palate, and also to give to His mouth its peculiar torment. His refusal to swallow it must be a mystery.

By the gall our sins are signified, and for our sins He is ready indeed to satisfy by His sorrowful Passion. But could He allow even what is a bare figure and shadow of sin



to incorporate itself with, and penetrate deeply into His immaculate and deified Humanity? Oh, no, never! This gall was not in the chalice, which He accepted with resignation in the garden. Therefore, the scourges have been sweet to Him; sweet is the cross, sweet also will be the nails; but that the gall of sin should enter His bowels, can not be sweet either to His most holy soul or to His most innocent body. Though the drink is not pure gall, but is mingled with wine, He can not endure the mixture of it. However, it is not that He abhors the bitterness of the gall, but that which it signifies.

Oh, how precious, my good Jesus! is this first lesson given by Thee to me on Calvary! Certain maxims and opinions, agreeable to pride and sensuality, have the color of good wine; but whatever sweetness such wine may have, it is mixed with gall, and I must refuse it, after Thy example. I shall hear what is said to me by the world, the flesh, and the devil; but I will not consent, and I will reject it.

My misfortune, O my God! is, that in pleasures of the earth I taste the sweetness and not the bitterness. My taste is depraved, and my mind, disordered by passions, is readily deceived. Ah! make me taste their real bitterness, that their empty sweetness may not inebriate me, and that I may rather abominate their seductive delusions. My soul, afflicted with as many diseases as it has vices, has lost its true savor. Ah! apply Thyself with Thy wonted mercy to heal it, so that it may relish and know and discern that true and great sweetness which Thou reservest for those that love Thee. Grant that without Thee nothing may again please or refresh me! Let all my delight be solely in Thy love, and let me always choose for myself rather to suffer with Thee than to rejoice without Thee. And when, O my Jesus! shall I commence really and truly to love Thee, so as entirely to forget vanity, and find my delight in Thee alone, who art the Truth!

For the regulation of my life, I shall adopt this rule: To abstain from every mixture of gall; that is, from every-

thing in which there can possibly be sin or the doubt or the danger of sin.

IV. Anxious to do their work speedily, the Jews do not lose time, after having to their heart's content abused Our Lord as a malefactor, who has at length brought Himself to the gibbet. Several workers of iniquity set themselves to do what is necessary to execute the sentence of death. One has with him hammers; another, nails; another, instruments for making the hole in which the cross is to be placed; and some fall on Him with fury to strip Him. Everything is done with malice and without considerateness. His tunic adheres to His wounds, that are again torn and reopened with bitter pain and loss of blood.

This is the fourth time that He appears in public naked, with still greater confusion and suffering. He does not refuse the tormenting ignominy of nakedness, to clothe us with immortal life. Behold, my soul, Thy Saviour streaming with blood; and with profound reverence adore that blood that drops upon the ground, for it is divine blood, the blood with which Thou art redeemed. Behold the only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father, who raises His eyes to Heaven and gives thanks that He has at last reached the point of being crucified thus poor and naked, for our love. But dost thou understand what He teaches thee by His nakedness?

Neither the world nor the devil can be conquered except by one that is poor and naked, and the kingdom of eternal bliss being promised only to the poor, it follows necessarily that we must be poor to obtain it. And what is this necessary poverty? Poverty of spirit, poverty of affection, which consists in living detached from the things of this world; not loving nor desiring them, but rather despising them as fleeting, false vanities, unworthy of the esteem and affection of a soul that has been destined in its creation for an eternity of glory.

Ah, my Jesus, great Lover of poverty! who hast chosen to be born poor, to live poor, and to be yet poorer in Thy death; ah! enlighten me, to know the miseries of vanity,

that I may not value them, and the preciousness of poverty, that I may love it. Thou, who hast made Thyself poor by Thy own choice, in order to dispense to us Thy immense riches, give me for my rich portion, poverty of spirit, by which my heart may be resigned amid the discomforts and want which I shall meet, detached from every creature and every created thing, and intimately united to Thee alone, my sovereign Good! I ask of Thee what I have not and can not have of myself; and from Thee I hope to obtain it. That by the poverty of nakedness suffered by Thee for my love, Thou wilt make me love and practise poverty of spirit for Thy love; so that I may ever look upon vanity with contempt, and place a high value on eternity.

The attachment that I entertain for my personal comforts is opposed to poverty of spirit. I shall labor to moderate it. Virtue does not consist in poverty, but in the love of poverty; not in experiencing its effects, but in affection for it.

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## CHAPTER LXIV.

### THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. JESUS CHRIST being the divine wisdom that rules all things; as He ordained that the place of His crucifixion should be Mount Calvary, so also in regard to the time, in order to show the excess of His charity, He ordained that He should be crucified in the flower of His age, on the anniversary of the creation of man, and at the very hour at which the first man sinned. The Evangelists use but one word to express His crucifixion, checked perhaps by horror and tears; and they leave us to imagine the manner of it, which will be fully revealed at the Last Judgment, by that God to whom alone is known what was the mercy of Jesus and the impiety of the Jews.

Let us then represent to ourselves our loving Saviour, who being commanded to throw Himself on the ground, in

order to be stretched on the cross, immediately falls on His knees, and with His head bowed down, refers His obedience to the command of His Eternal Father. It is especially at the approaching act of the crucifixion that He gives, by His humility, exceeding glory to the divine Majesty; showing Himself obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross, which is the most ignominious of all. Here likewise it properly is that He accomplishes our Redemption, by paying for us on the cross the price of His divine life.

Reflect, my soul, that if the obedience of the Son of God has been admirable in His becoming Man for thee, far more admirable is His obedience now, when He puts Himself for thee on the cross, to die on it like an infamous criminal. He thus teaches thee how God is to be obeyed. How dost thou obey?

O stupendous prodigy, so stupendous that the heavens may well be astounded! I am most obedient to the concupiscence of the flesh, and to the laws of the world, even so far as to be willing to receive in punishment of this my guilty obedience, an eternal death; and oh! how reluctant am I to obey Thee, my sovereign Lord and my God, who hast promised eternal life to those who obey Thee! Conduct so refractory as mine arises from nothing but a perverse love, which has gained dominion over me. I love too much my sensuality, too much the vain things of the world, and my obedience is prompt in that to which my love inclines me. Ah! omnipotent God! purify my love from all that vitiates it, so that I may no longer love things temporal and fleeting, but those which are spiritual and eternal; no longer the world, but Thee, who art the Creator of the world. If I love Thee as I ought, I shall also be obedient to Thee. Behold my heart. Fill it with Thy love, and I promise to obey Thee perfectly in all things.

To imitate Jesus, who obeys the executioners with His eyes fixed on God, I shall practise humility by obeying even my inferiors, preferring for the love of God the will of others to my own.

II, In the Passion of Jesus Christ the eye of the soul



should be kept continually fixed, at one time on the Humanity which suffers, at another on the Divinity which providentially arranges all that has been ordained by mercy from eternal ages. Wherefore this Man-God, knowing that the hour is come, in which, not through necessity, but by His own free will, He is to be crucified, behold, He stretches Himself on the cross, placing His back, which is all wounds, on the hard and rough wood. There is no need to use force with Him. He Himself stretches out His hands, as if desirous to embrace His beloved people though rebellious and ungrateful, and to unite to Himself and press to His Heart all the faithful of His Church.

He offers first His right hand, which is on the side opposite the heart, as well to denote His love, as because with this hand Adam sinned when he took the apple. The executioner, fixing a large nail in the middle of the palm, gives it repeated blows with the hammer, to make it enter the hand and wood, till it comes out on the other side. What pain, and what horrible convulsions, at the laceration of the flesh, the muscles, the veins, and the arteries of this most delicate body!

See, my soul! how the blood gushes out from the wound, and how Jesus in the meantime offers it to the Eternal Father for thee. Oh! how hard is thy heart, harder than stone, if it is not softened at such a sight. Beg thy Saviour to grant thee one tear of compassion, one tear of contrition; and kneeling down, go in spirit to adore and thank and kiss that sacred hand pierced by this nail for thee.

O my Jesus! I compassionate Thee in that bitter pain which Thou sufferest in this right hand, which spans the heavens, that are adorned with stars, and filled with blissful delights! Oh, how much am I indebted to this hand of Thine! It is with this hand that Thou hast protected me; at one time by holding me back, and not allowing me to fall, at another by raising me up, when I had fallen through my own fault. O most sweet Jesus! I am the son of Thy right hand, and it is from this hand crucified that I hope



for the grace to be converted, the grace to be perfectly reformed, and to be saved eternally.

Extend to me, O Jesus! this right hand, and glorify it over me by giving me an efficacious grace to overcome all the enemies of my eternal salvation, and to reach the mount of sanctity, the mount of glory, which Thou, by Thy right hand, hast purchased for me. O most holy wound! I adore thee, and I beg thee to continue to extend thy gracious protection over me.

I shall acknowledge as proceeding from the wound of the right hand of Jesus, those graces by which, on dangerous occasions, I have been kept from sin, and those also, by which after sinning, I have been moved to humble myself and repent.

III. Still more cruel is the crucifixion of the left hand. For as it will not reach the hole already made in the cross, the executioners seize the arm and violently drag it till it reaches the mark, thus widening the wound of the right hand, dislocating the shoulders and breaking many nerves. In this way is this hand nailed as was the other, and pain being thus heaped on pain, well-nigh does the blessed Jesus breathe out His soul with fainting and exhaustion.

If we should see an animal crucified in this manner, human nature would experience some tender emotion. What then is the compassion that we owe to Jesus Christ! But let us not fix our thoughts on His bodily pain so as to forget the affliction of His soul. What heart-rending anguish must we believe His to be at seeing Himself thus covered with ignominies and overwhelmed with sufferings? Nevertheless, all He suffers does not prevent the mind from exercising most virtuous acts. What acts of love to God does He not make! What acts of love for us! What acts of love for the cross, so closely united and fastened to it as He is!

Let us draw near to ask Him what are these wounds in the midst of His hands? He will answer, that they are signs and testimonies of His loving obedience. Oh, how much then is to be learned from only looking at these im-

maculate hands! Divine charity has imprinted my name on them, and oh! that I might have the happiness to have their wounds also imprinted on my heart, to cancel all the images and impressions of vice!

My most loving Jesus! have the mercy, I beseech Thee, to remember that Thou hast made me with Thy hands; with those hands which are transfixed with nails for me. Ah! wilt Thou despise the work of Thine omnipotent and magnificent hands? Look at the wounds in these same hands; read there my salvation, written with those nails in letters of blood, and have mercy and save me.

I will seek no other shelter or repose than in these wounds. In that in the right is the fountain of that life which is true life. In the left is an immense treasure of riches and glory; and what more can I desire or hope for? Fix in Thy wounds, O my Saviour! my affections, my desires, my hopes; for here it is that mercy and truth, peace and justice, meet to reconcile me with God. Most sacred Wounds! I adore you, I thank you, I kiss you, and I pray you to safeguard and defend me from those perils in which I am continually placed, of losing the grace of God, and of losing, moreover, His eternal glory.

To secure to myself the hope of my salvation in the wounds of Jesus Christ, I will learn this maxim, as though written in these same wounds: To obey God, and whoever holds the place of God over me.

IV. The hands of Jesus Christ being nailed, they now turn to His feet; and as these will not reach the place where the nail is to be fixed, one of the executioners begins to pull them with all his might. Then one being placed over the other, these too are pierced through with a longer nail, which they continue to hammer till it comes out at the back of the wood. Through the cruel violence used in thus pulling His entire body, His muscles are so rent, and the joints of His back, chest, and loins, so displaced, that the bones being dislodged from their sockets, they may be numbered one by one, as He Himself has said by the Prophet.

Strange and poignant beyond words to express is His

pain. And where is compassion in my heart? If it happen that my foot is pricked with a thorn, I complain and grieve at the wound. While for Jesus transfixed with nails my affections are no more moved than if I were a creature without sense. How is this? Have I then more love for a foot, which is one of my members, than I have for Jesus Christ, who is my Head?

See, my soul! with what patience and meekness He suffers this horrible torment, without complaining either of the thorns piercing His head, or of the nails that perforate His hands and feet, or of the executioners who treat Him worse than if He were a brute. This is our Head, to whom we are bound to conform ourselves, if we wish to be saved. But how far are we from imitating Him, in our delicacy, sensuality and impatience!

Ah, my most loving Jesus! I humble myself before Thee, full of shame and confusion. Oh, grant that I may cleave to Thy crucified feet! I am unworthy of it, because I am a great sinner; but have patience even with me, and spurn me not from Thy feet, from these feet under which is the universe, which the Seraphim glorify in covering with their wings, and which with giant steps are come from heaven to earth for me.

O sacred feet thus nailed to the cross for me, because I have walked in the ways of iniquity to perdition, I beg pardon of you, with contrition for my sins, and I implore of Our Lord, through your merits, that He would conduct me in the path of virtue and give me strength to follow on with such constancy, treading after you, that I may happily arrive at my last end. You, O deified feet, are a figure of mercy and of judgment! Make me now taste the sweetness of mercy, and escape the rigors of the tremendous judgment.

V. The crucifixion over, a parchment is fastened to the top of the cross, with these words written on it, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews;"<sup>1</sup> thus declaring to all the world that after so many accusations and so much noise,

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 19.

no other cause for condemning Him to death has been found than this alone: that He is the King and Saviour of the world. The Jews are displeased that Pilate should have written them; but by heavenly dispensation, he insists that what is written is written; because that is unchangeably true, which has been said by Jesus Christ, that He is King; and in spite of the Jews, it will always be true, both in His death and after death, that He is King.

Jesus Christ is a High Priest who, on the altar of the cross, offers Himself to His Father, and He is also a King, who comes to found the kingdom of His Church, on the four extremities of the cross, and to extend it to the confines of the four quarters of the world. The title is written in characters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, that the oracle of the Prophet may be fulfilled, that nations of every language shall be the people of the King.

Reflect, my soul, how all is contained in the first word of this title, namely, in the word *Jesus*. He is crucified for this sole reason that He is *Jesus*, that is, Saviour. If this cause of His dying be taken away, there is no other. He is *Jesus*; and because He is *Jesus*, God and Man, behold how, whilst His Humanity suffers, the Divinity beams forth with royal majesty over His head. It is expressed in the title that He is a divine King, whether of the elect, who believe in Him, to reward them, or of the unbelieving reprobate, to punish them.

My Jesus, my Saviour, my King, my God! oh, how consoling is it for me that Thy innocence is manifested amid calumnies, and Thy glory amid ignominies! I rejoice that it is known from the title of the cross, that in spite of Thy enemies, Thou art a divine King over all the kings of the earth; thus hath written the Eternal Father, and thus will it be infallibly. If I am saved, Thou art my God and my King, who with mercy wilt make me happy forever in Thy kingdom. If I am damned, Thou art no less my God and my King, who for eternity wilt make me endure the scourges of Thy most righteous anger.

As for Thee, Thou art no less honored by a brand of



hell, than by a star of the firmament. But as for myself, ah! is it not better that I should acknowledge and bless Thee as my God and my King through love, with a holy hope, than that I should hereafter, as a miserable despairing sinner, curse Thee forever? Yes, my Jesus! I acknowledge Thee and adore Thee as my King and my God, and I offer myself to obey Thee in everything that pleases Thee. O Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews! that is, King of all those that believe and hope in Thee, have mercy on me.

Whenever I behold the Crucifix or meditate upon it, I shall remember the title of the cross, to believe and to confess that this Man of Sorrows is true God. In proportion to my faith shall be my profit.

VI. There are four executioners who have crucified Our Lord; and as they have no means to repay themselves for the cruelty they have exercised, they contemptuously tear His upper garment into four parts, and draw lots for His under tunic with a mockery which they forbear to cast on the thieves. These circumstances are minute, but though they are minute, they are written in the Gospel, because already foretold by the Prophets, and distinctly verified in Jesus Christ, they serve to strengthen our faith. They are also written as being mysterious. Let us with fruit ponder one only of these mysteries.

By the outer garment of Jesus Christ, which is divided into four parts, is figured the exterior grace of Christianity, which is diffused over the four quarters of the world,—a participation in the word of God and in the Sacraments being common to all. The under garment is a symbol of the interior spirit, of that unction, devotion, charity and vivifying grace which is not given to all. It is given as it were by lot, and falls to the few; because as the lot falls without regard either of person or merit, so this grace is bestowed by God, through an occult judgment of His, on those only to whom He sees it right and good to give it.

How profound is the mystery of divine wisdom, and moreover how humiliating for us! Reflect, my soul, that it avails little to profess the religion of Jesus Christ, if we



have not the spirit of Jesus Christ. The works of Christianity are an external garment common to all; but not to all belongs the inner garment, which is that spirit of grace by which actions are rendered worthy of eternal life. This spirit in my case is a matter of lot; because it is not given to one undeserving of it, except by a simple act of the loving kindness of God. And who knows whether such a lot will fall to me? O unsearchable abyss! This should be meditated upon, not to cast us into despair, but to humble us.

If I have humility, then I shall please Thee, O my God! then I shall share in that grace of justification and perseverance, which Thou bestowest only upon the humble, Thy elect. I have no occasion to throw myself into despair, on account of Thy secret judgments, since I know for a certainty that this is one of Thy judgments, to be always favorable to the humble. If I am not humble, the fault will be my own. Mine will be the punishment; on Thy part, most just, the punishment of my pride. Give me, therefore, sincere humility, O my God! to dispose me to receive that spirit of sanctity that is necessary for my eternal salvation; because without humility it is impossible for any one to attain either sanctity or salvation.

I shall thank Jesus Christ for the benefits He has granted me, and still grants me in the holy Church. Moreover, I shall resolve to unite my exterior works of virtue with the interior spirit.

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## CHAPTER LXV.

### JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO THIEVES.

I. IN the Old Law the sacrifice was lifted up on high, as an offering to Almighty God; and thus it is done with Jesus Christ, who has sacrificed Himself for us. The executioners drag the cross to the hole, in which it is to be placed, and raising it by degrees, till it stands upright in

the air, they let it fall down all at once, so that by the shock all the limbs of the crucified Lord are violently shaken, the joints wrenched apart, and the wounds reopened with most excruciating pain, sufficient to make him die in convulsions.

He Himself had predicted it, with reference to the well-known history, that as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent to save the life of the Jews from the bites of the fiery serpents, so He should be raised aloft on the cross, to give to His faithful that true life of which the infernal serpent had deprived them. Let us then behold in the raising of the crucified Lord, not the figure, but the truth figured.

See, my soul, that He has His mouth open, His tongue bloody, His eyes half dead, His face in mourning with the pallor of death, His flesh wasted, His body so drawn together that He appears to be destitute of bowels! Oh, what anguish! What inexplicable, incomprehensible suffering, that He should be placed on high in such a condition, having no support on which to rest the natural weight of His entire body except the nails. What madness in me to be unmoved at such a sight, and to be without feeling! The devils yield, humbled and conquered by Jesus Christ; and must not my malice be more than diabolical if it refuse to be subdued by His immense goodness?

O crucified Jesus! I hear the voice of Thy wounds crying out to excite me to love One who has deigned to suffer such horrible torments for me. I wish to love Thee, O my Saviour! for all my love is due to Thee; but I have a heart as hard, frozen and insensible as though it were the heart of a dead person. Ah! wound it with one of Thy nails that it may awaken and revive. I do not desire that Thou shouldst expose Thyself to fresh wounds for me, but only that Thou shouldst apply to my heart one at least of the many wounds Thou hast already received, that it may be touched and may breathe forth some loving sighs toward Thee.

The first effect of my love must be that my interior man, nurtured in malice and sin, should be crucified with Thee,

O my Jesus! who art crucified for sin. In vain shall I attempt to ascend to higher degrees of mystic love, if I do not ground myself in the first degree, which is to grieve for having offended my God, with a sincere resolution to offend Him no more.

Kneeling at the foot of the cross, I shall implore of Jesus crucified to be efficaciously my Saviour, by granting me that love which is necessary for me in order to attain eternal salvation.

II. It was written in the sacred oracles that the Messiah should be like a torch, diffusing its light on every side. This torch, in fact, was placed on the candlestick, when Jesus Christ was placed on the cross. But see what the Jews are doing to obscure His reputation. Having crucified with Him two thieves, they raise them up, one on His right, the other on His left, that He may appear in the middle as their chief, and worse than they. They have always endeavored to throw discredit on Him by calumnies; and now they make their last effort by putting Him to the most shameful death in the company of malefactors. Reflect, my soul, on His confusion at the ignominy of seeing Himself exposed to the eyes of so many people and nations, reputed worse than these two who are the worst in the city of Jerusalem. He is aware of the dishonor that is done Him. He comprehends it, and He has all the sorrow and displeasure that such circumstances naturally cause. Still He endures it with such meekness and patience as to create astonishment that can not be expressed. He is worthy of being adored and imitated; since by this action He triumphs over the pride of the world.

O my Jesus! Thy humility was great in being born in a stable between two brute beasts; but what humility is this, to be willing to die crucified between two thieves! On Tabor Thou hadst only three witnesses of Thy glory, when Thou didst show Thyself arrayed in dazzling splendor between Moses and Elias; and now on Calvary, Thou dost choose to have a million witnesses to be spectators of Thy abjection, beholding Thee in the character of a criminal—

and an infamous criminal—condemned to die with assassins. What humility is this!

I compassionate Thee in Thy misery, O eternal Word! who art as it were in the midst of the Most Blessed Trinity in Paradise. I compassionate Thee, O King of Glory, reduced for me to suffer such painful confusion. I bless and thank Thee for this splendid example which Thou dost give me. How beautiful would it be for me, if on meeting with some injury or contempt, I were to practise patience with sentiments of sincere humility, thus uniting my patience and humility with Thine! But humility and patience are wanting to me. I desire them, on account of the desire I have of imitating Thee. Ah, my Jesus! who hast willed to be crucified, not to condemn but to save me, listen favorably to my desires. With Thy assistance, I also shall exert myself; for woe to me! I shall be the most unhappy of men, if I make Thy Passion ineffectual in curing me of pride and arrogance.

I shall make the resolution rather to have patience myself, when trials come to me, than to expect it of others. I shall strive to humble myself, rather than seek to humble others.

III. The intention of the Jews in exposing Jesus crucified, between two thieves, was to destroy His reputation. But this was not God's design. For thus was the prophecy of Our Saviour verified, and it has thus been made known, that as He died under the appearance of a sinner, in the midst of sinners, He died in general for the salvation of sinners, calling all mankind without exception to enjoy the benefit of His plentiful Redemption. Shortly before He went to the garden, He predicted that He was to be placed among the wicked; and the Jews do no more than verify this prophecy, in spite of themselves, still without availing themselves of the prophecy thus verified to acknowledge the Saviour.

Reflect, my soul, how Jesus crucified between thieves, now manifestly declares that the principal aim of His infinite charity, in suffering so painful a Passion, has been to call

and seek and save miserable sinners, offering as a remedy for their mortal infirmities, the blood that flows from His wounds. With what confidence ought we to approach Him, since we know that He does not refuse the society of sinners, and that it is for sinners that He is crucified.

Oh, how much, my Jesus! is Thy infinite wisdom to be admired, which conceals infinite power beneath so great misery and wretchedness. How admirable that a Man, condemned to die upon the cross with thieves, should set free all men condemned to eternal death with devils! I adore with most profound reverence the sublimity of all Thy mysteries. But, moreover, how much consolation is there for me when I see Thee, enduring for me so much pain and shedding torrents of blood! In truth, my sins are many and grievous; but can I doubt Thy mercy when I behold Thee crucified for these same sins of mine, and behold Thee with extended arms waiting to receive and pardon me? What more can I desire in order to put an end to my want of confidence?

O Jesus, ardent Lover of sinners! here am I, the greatest sinner of all, who come for pardon, confiding in Thy merits, which Thou hast willed should be my merits also. With most lively sentiments of love and contrition, I repent for having offended a God so great and good as Thou art, most worthy to be loved above all the things of this world. I now throw myself into Thy arms. With Thee, I will live; with Thee I will die, desirous of loving Thee and of increasing in Thy love.

I shall impress on my mind an exalted idea of the Passion of Jesus Christ; and considering it as having been undergone for me, I shall place in it entire confidence for the execution of my good purposes.

IV. Let us look well at Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is crucified naked and exposed to the eyes of all, that it may be seen in what condition is every part of His blessed body. His head is crowned with thorns, and He knows not where to rest it. His face is defiled with spittle; His mouth embittered with gall; His ears tormented with blasphemies;



His hands nailed; His feet transpierced; and His flesh covered with wounds. Let us look well at Him, not with the eyes of Jewish incredulity, that see in Him nothing more than a man. Not with envy and contempt, but with eyes of faith, reflecting who this Man is whom we behold thus crucified and immersed in an ocean of sufferings.

He is the true God begotten by a Father who is God, immense in majesty, in beauty, and in His own eternal, essential felicity. How then is the divine Majesty so dishonored? The divine beauty so disfigured? The divine felicity so tormented? The divine eternity in the agonies of death? Who has reduced a God to such extremity? His own unparalleled charity alone. Through this charity having become Man, He exposes Himself on the cross to the sight of all, that it may be understood how much He loves us, and how much He deserves to be loved by us.

Consequently, although there is no portion of His body, from head to foot, that can be called sound, His Heart alone, though steeped in mortal sadness, is yet strong, vigorous and bright; because it is the seat of love. Love resides there and rules and strengthens nature to support the Passion. Therefore, thou, my soul, who desirest to love the Lord, when wilt thou find anything that can more easily move thee to love Him than that thou shouldst stand still and regard Him attentively? Lift up the eyes of thy mind, and behold what painful sorrows He is enduring, whilst in order to save thee, He has come to seek thee. Prostrating thyself with respectful humility, return love for love to His deified Heart.

Hail to Thee, O Heart of Jesus, inflamed with love! I am indebted to Thee for so many and such cruel outrages, which my Saviour has suffered for me. And how can I be grateful in the midst of my wretchedness? O most sweet Heart! most pure Heart! purify this heart from attachment to vanity; so that, purified and cleansed, it may unite itself heart to heart with Thee, may breathe and sigh in its moments of fervor with Thee, and may have no other life than that of Thy love, to adore and honor Thee worthily,

with so much pleasure to myself that I may no longer desire the pleasures of the world. My Jesus! through Thy Heart, I beg that I may be crucified with Thee, that with Thy three nails the three powers of my soul, memory, will, and understanding, may be transfixed with entire conformity to Thy blessed will.

I shall remember nothing which it does not please God that I should remember. I shall think of nothing but what pleases God I should think of. I shall never desire what it does not please God that I should desire.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

### JESUS CRUCIFIED SCOFFED AT BY THE JEWS.

I. AFTER Jesus Christ has been crucified in body, the Jews crucify His soul also; not ceasing to heap sorrow upon sorrow, by adding reproaches and scoffs to the torture of the cross. It is a law of nature, that one who is afflicted should be compassionated, or at least not derided, but there is no law in favor of Jesus Christ. See, my soul, how they stand looking at Him, and making game of Him. All classes, from the highest to the lowest, vomit against Him horrible blasphemies, and manifest the satisfaction they take in His calamity by their furious gestures and demeanor. Everywhere sorrows, everywhere insults, but in the good Jesus what humility, what patience! When it is thought that He is satiated with reproaches, He is yet hungering after them more and more. He feels the dishonor that afflicts and torments Him extremely; nevertheless, He desires it for our love.

Must we not recognize Him as God, by His patience alone? Let us admire the Most High, the Glory of the angels in heaven, become the last and lowest of all men on Calvary. Let us return thanks to His immense goodness, since not by force but of His own will He is pleased to be so scorned and debased in order to free us from confusion

and ignominy which shall have no end. Let us excite ourselves to imitate Him, chiefly by bearing with patience and humility insults and adversities. Oh, how foolish we are, to be ashamed of being meek and humble! How can the servant be dishonored by doing that which his Lord does with glory?

O divine Saviour! what must Thou have said interiorly, when bearing on the cross so many insults for me, at the same time having me present in Thy divine mind and seeing the obligation I am under of imitating Thee, Thou didst behold me so punctilious, so morose, so jealous of my chimerical honor, that I can not endure a little detraction, a trifling slight, without complaint and resentment? Wretched Christian that I am! How couldst Thou, O Lord! love this Lucifer of the earth, who is so proud, notwithstanding the example Thou dost give him of patient humility? I bless and thank Thy holy charity, and I detest and abominate my execrable pride. Ah! communicate to me with Thy humility, Thy love. If I am not humble, I shall never have the grace to love Thee, I shall not have the grace to practise that humility which is genuine, and which consists in receiving humiliations willingly for Thy love. I confide in Thy merits that Thy grace may not fail me in time of trial.

There is no remedy more efficacious against pride than to remember the humility of Jesus crucified. Therefore, I shall often call it to mind, rendering the thought of it habitual, in order to turn it to advantage when necessary.

II. Amongst the reproaches with which Our Lord Jesus Christ is insulted on the cross this is one, that the rabble and the princes pass before Him, looking at Him, and jeering Him with those words: "He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the elect of God. If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself."<sup>1</sup> They speak thus to insult and discredit Him, as if He were neither King nor God, and that He may be regarded as an impertinent boaster. But we may believe that this also is said by the

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke xxiii, 35, 37.

instigation of the devils, who feel the virtue of the Crucified, and tremble and would wish the Redemption of man might not be completed on the cross.

But let us reflect on the constancy of Jesus. He grieves at the blasphemy He hears, and though He might cause Himself to be acknowledged as God by working this miracle, and coming down from the cross, He prefers rather to teach us patience, than to gain admiration by exercising His power. He would rather be known as God, by dying on the cross and saving our souls, than by descending from it and saving Himself. Had He not willed, He would not have been crucified; and because he willed to be nailed to the cross for us, He will not descend from the cross, that it may be understood that the Author of salvation has no need to work miracles to save Himself; and that our eternal salvation can not be accomplished without perseverance.

My Jesus, God-Man! how strong is Thy love for me, that binds omnipotence and keeps Thee united and fastened to the cross more effectually than do the nails, more than could all the cords in the world! But how weak, on the other hand, is my love for Thee; scarcely does a cross befall me, than I am most impatient to shake it off, and I have not the slightest constancy to mortify my self-love by bearing a trifling affliction! We can not love the Crucified, if we do not love the cross; and as I do not love the cross, this is an evident sign that neither do I love Thee, my most amiable Saviour!

Thy example alone, on beholding Thee so patient in suffering so many insults for me, ought to be more than sufficient to fortify me to bear every injurious affront for Thee. Whence comes it then that I have not patience to support a single word in the least degree sharp or sarcastic that may be addressed to me? It seems to me at times that I have some fervor. But this is only at certain intervals. I seek to come down from the cross the very moment that I commence to feel it. Ah, my Jesus! make me love Thee, and love the cross also in imitation of Thee, with a true and persevering love. Of what use is it to begin and not to



persevere in virtue, since Thou hast promised Thy glory only to Him who gains it by perseverance?

I shall reflect on my instability and pusillanimity, and I shall make my reflection an occasion for humbling myself, knowing myself to be good-for-nothing, so that I may implore the divine grace by frequent prayer.

III. However greatly Jesus Christ may be tormented and insulted, there is always some circumstance or other by which He may be recognized for what He is—the Man-God. He is blasphemed, He is derided as if He foolishly boasted that He is the Son of God, and vainly confided in God, and was not truly innocent, unless he gave a miraculous proof of His innocence by descending from the cross. But as it had been foretold in the Scripture, that the Messiah would be a butt for these derisions and blasphemies, we have here a light to know God, in the precise moment that His Divinity is scoffed at by unbelievers. As in the saints, so in the Saint of saints, constant perseverance in suffering is a proof of sanctity.

The Jews promise to believe Him to be God, if He will descend from the cross. They say this, not because they are disposed to believe, but rather that no one may believe a Man so despised and derided to be God. Moreover, they say it by the instigation of the devils, who wish to prevent in the work of the cross the Redemption of the world. The infernal enemy knows that Jesus Christ has allowed Himself to be crucified through zeal for the salvation of souls. Therefore, he supposes that He will perhaps descend from the cross, through the same zeal for saving those souls by faith. But our Man-God pays no regard either to the talk of men or to the stratagems of devils, and teaches us by His example that virtue never should be abandoned, however men may speak and the devils rage against us.

O heavenly Master, who has more need than I have of profiting by this holy lesson? Sometimes I choose for myself the cross, in imitation of Thee, with a desire to exercise myself in mortification, patience, and humility. But what haste I often make to come down from this cross, for every

foolish motive that is suggested to me by the devil, the world and the flesh. Under pretence of not injuring my health, my honor, or for some temporal interest, I seek my satisfactions, and defend my trifling points of honor, and even give the name of propriety and discretion to the gratification of my senses; the name of justice and zeal to my impatience and pride.

My Jesus, my God! I behold Thy example and I hear Thy voice, with which from the cross Thou tellest me not to listen to those who would turn me from the way of virtue, and to be firm in the discharge of my duties. However, I am wilfully deaf and blind, and I will not permit myself to be guided by Thy light, nor to be penetrated by Thy voice. I deceive myself, and allow myself to be deceived, because I actually love to be deceived. Ah! assist me by Thy grace. I know that I can not deceive myself in the love of the cross. Establish this truth in my mind, and give strength to my heart to endure it.

One glance at the Crucifix will suffice to show the vanity of the pretexts by which I justify in myself an idle life, a life of ease spent in the indulgence of self-love.

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## CHAPTER LXVII.

### JESUS CRUCIFIED PRAYS FOR HIS ENEMIES.

I. LET us consider Jesus Christ on His cross, as a Master in His chair, whose first lesson, given in the prayer that He offers up for His enemies, is one of unspeakable charity. He has already preached this virtue many, many times; and now by His example He leaves us, as it were, an epilogue of His doctrine, giving proofs of the most tender benevolence, not only toward His persecutors and calumniators, but even to His executioners. By this He teaches us to love our enemies, who have not as yet taken away our lives, as He loves His enemies at the very time that they are mercilessly putting Him to death.

Most astounding is the charity of Jesus, who does not consider from whom He suffers, but for whom. He begs that they may be pardoned by whom He is at the very time ill-treated; and He is solicitous for the life of those who are putting Him to death. He makes no account of the sufferings He endures in His most innocent body, that the souls of sinners may be saved. And as the loss of souls gives Him more pain than His own Passion, He offers this Passion to His Father, in order that not even one of these unhappy souls may be lost. My soul, hast thou ever seen a person so benign, so meek? If death is a great infirmity of human nature, oh, how excellent a virtue is it to die amidst the flames of a charity like this!

Ah, my Jesus! dispose me now to live in such a manner that I may be worthy to resemble Thee in death, by wishing well to every one that wishes evil to me. Give me a spirit like Thine, that I may remember to recommend in my prayers all those who offend me, and still more those that offend Thee. Since Thou hast offered Thyself absolutely to the divine Majesty for Thy enemies, among whom I also was numbered, grant that I may renew Thy offerings as a propitiation for myself.

Eternal Father! look down from the sanctuary of Thy glory on the most precious Victim which our High Priest, Thy Son Jesus, offers Thee. He has sacrificed His life in agony, and with the loss of His blood, to make satisfaction for me. What more dost Thou desire, in compensation to Thy justice, and to appease Thy anger? Graciously hear that feeble voice, with which He entreats Thee to pardon me my sins; and for the sake of this most noble Suppliant, who has all power with Thee, show that Thou art more merciful toward me in pardoning than I have been malicious against Thee in sinning.

I shall imitate the prudent charity of Jesus, who hates the sin but loves the sinner. This distinction is practically difficult, but by the divine grace it shall become easy to me.

II. In the whole of the preceding Passion, Jesus Christ has made Himself known as Man-God, and so likewise does

He act on the cross. Although He could show Himself as God by taking an exterminating vengeance on His enemies, He prefers to give proofs of His Divinity by patience, and by the charity of wishing well to every one who does Him harm. After having been silent until the present, without complaining either of torments or of outrages, He turns to God His Father and implores Him to have mercy on all those who persecute Him with so much cruelty and injustice. Oh, prayer truly worthy of the Son of God! The Prophet had predicted that the Messiah would offer up this prayer. Who ever had so great love for his friends as Jesus has for His enemies?

By this affectionate fervor in asking blessings on His executioners themselves, He manifests who He is, true God, Son of a Father who is God, as He had already declared, and, as He had already taught, that we must pray for our persecutors and calumniators in order that we may be children of our heavenly Father. He now gives us on the cross a most admirable example of this. He might have performed this act of virtue silently; but He would, moreover, express it with His voice, to be heard and imitated by us. And why do we think that He reserved these words till the end of His life, if not that like the last words of a dying father, they might be more deeply imprinted on the hearts of His children?

My Jesus, my God! what must I say at the sight of Thy prodigious charity, when scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to a tree, loaded with insults, it seems that Thou hast forgotten Thyself, and art wholly intent on imploring from the Eternal Father mercy for Thy very executioners! O God of infinite goodness! what sweetness of grace and of glory wilt Thou give to those who love Thee, since Thou pourest out in superabundance the oil of Thy mercies on those who hate Thee?

Grant, oh, grant me the grace of Thy love. Behold now my disposition for obtaining it. I recommend to Thee, O Lord! all my neighbors who, in any manner, whether by word or deed, have offended me; and I implore Thee by the



merits of Thy charity, to give them Thy holy benediction, which may fill them with every best gift in this life and in the life to come. After this my heartfelt prayer, which I know to be acceptable to Thee, wilt Thou refuse me the grace that I ask for myself? I desire to love Thee, and in order to love Thee, I commence to imitate Thee. But do Thou give to the imitation that perfection to which Thou wilt that I should aspire.

In particular I shall pray for those that speak ill of me, and who offend me in my reputation. This I shall do in imitation of Jesus Christ, who prays on the cross for His murderers.

III. In the greatness of the Passion of Jesus Christ, the greatness of His charity is always to be more and more imitated. Hence it must be considered that He not only prays for all those who have crucified Him, and who condemn Him, but in order to move His Father to have pity on them, He also seeks to excuse and extenuate the heinousness of their sin, by saying that they know not what they do. Oh, how ingenious is charity! It is true that these wicked men neither know that this Man is the Son of God, nor how atrocious is their crime. But it is an affected ignorance, proceeding from a malicious will, which does not know, because it does not wish to know. Nevertheless, Jesus, in His mercy compassionates; and no longer a God of anger, but a God of mercy, on behalf of His Humanity He lovingly pardons. He covers the iniquity with His blood, and begs His Father to accept the excuse of ignorance, to facilitate the pardon of malice.

Behold, my soul, what thy Saviour teaches thee by His example! Thus thou also shouldst act, when by word or deed thou feelest Thyself offended by any one. Whoever sins is truly blind and ignorant, and knows not what he does. Who would ever sin, if he would reflect on the offence he commits against God; on heaven, which he forfeits; and on hell, which he deserves by his sins? Ignorance is the origin of all evil; and this ignorance, though culpable, which we love to have compassionated in ourselves, we

ought, moreover, to compassionate, and to pray that it may be compassionated in others.

My God, my Jesus, my Master! how is it that I do not blush with Thy example before me? Thou so kind and charitable, and I so proud and haughty, that, instead of excusing and pitying my neighbor in his defects, I rather magnify them, condemn him with bitter zeal, and interpret his actions for the worst. What would become of me if Thou didst act toward me as I act toward others? I owe thanks without measure and without end to Thy goodness, that has such pity for me, who am deserving of the severest chastisements for my inexcusable sins. I am grieved that I am incapable of thanking Thee as I should, and as I desire.

Ah! kindle in me true charity, that may make me like Thee, in knowing how to love and pity those who wish me ill; and a true faith, which may not suffer me to be in ignorance of the enormous evil that is committed by sin. I know that by sin the divine Majesty is offended, the glory of Paradise lost, and an eternity of hell merited. I know it, but I do not think of it; and because I do not think of it, I easily sin. Oh, too guilty ignorance! Can the sinner justify himself by saying, I did not know, I did not think? Ah, my dear Jesus! keep alive the faith within me that I may never more offend Thee.

I shall restrain the wicked inclination I experience to form unkind judgments and suspicions of my neighbor. I shall excuse as much as possible the faults of others, to imitate in this also the charity of Jesus.

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## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### JESUS CHRIST PROMISES PARADISE TO THE GOOD THIEF.

I. No sooner has Jesus Christ prayed for His enemies, than immediately on hearing Him, one of the thieves crucified at His side is enlightened. He had never before been

with Our Saviour, either to listen to His sermons, or to see His miracles. And now the first time that he is with Him, on the gibbet of the cross, observing the patience and charity with which He endures so great sufferings and so many insults, he immediately recognizes Him and confesses Him to be God. He humbles himself, accuses himself, and asks His mercy to deliver him, not from bodily death, but from the eternal death of the soul: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom."<sup>1</sup> Thus speaks this thief to Jesus. Jesus, who sees his repentance, though He also beholds His afflicted Mother present, before He consoles the Mother, turns to the thief and says: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."<sup>2</sup>

In these words of Jesus Christ the fruit of His Passion begins to be experienced, for the promise of Paradise had never been made from the commencement of the world till that hour. But let us reflect to whom this promise of Paradise is made. Heaven is promised to a thief who, after having merited hell more than a thousand times, viewing his own sins in the wounds of Jesus Christ, repents and grieves for them with a sincere act of contrition. More than the glory of Paradise can not be given to the saints, who have spent their whole lives in heroic works of sanctity; and this glory is promised and given to a penitent of an hour, who by virtue of his contrition, from a great sinner, becomes a great martyr.

Oh, consoling thought! Why should I despair of the pardon of my sins, and of my eternal salvation, when I see absolution given and heaven opened with so great mercy to a wicked thief? Ah, my Jesus! who hast willed to be crucified, to make known from the cross Thy Divinity, and to be crucified between two thieves, to show Thy omnipotent power in this thief, remember that, no less than for this thief Thou hast been crucified for me also. Therefore, remember me, now that Thou art in Thy kingdom.

My sins are grievous. more so than those of the good

(1) St. Luke xxiii, 42.

(2) Ibid. 43.

thief, because I am a most ungrateful sinner; but through the merits of Thy Passion, I also hope and trust that Thy mercy over sinners will be infinitely greater. For me as well as for this thief have Thy wounds been opened, and Thy most precious blood shed. Therefore, with the same confidence I also exclaim, *Memento mei*, O my Saviour! Remember me, who have been redeemed by Thee with a plentiful Redemption.

I shall make acts of hope in the mercy of God, and in the merits of Jesus Christ, for the remission of my sins, and for eternal salvation. Moreover, I shall hope and ask for the grace of contrition.

II. That hope may not degenerate into presumption, we should consider that the good thief has, it is true, been converted and saved by a strong gift of grace, which Jesus Christ has merited for him. But, on his side, he has also faithfully coöperated with this grace. Being crucified, and having only his heart and tongue at liberty, he has made a most religious use of both the one and the other, by exercising toward Jesus Christ faith, hope and charity, at a time when circumstances are such that, if he has interior light to know Him to be God, exterior appearances represent Him to be merely Man, and the most abject of men.

Again, the good thief has not delayed to correspond with the divine vocation, till the last hour of his life; but at the first, at the very hour in which he felt the impulse of grace, he yielded. Hence, he is not to be imitated in waiting until death to give oneself to God. For how many has a false hope like this been a deception! But in the other point of obeying the divine call without delay, since every delay is dangerous, and the greater the delay, the greater the danger.

My soul, Jesus Christ now calls thee, and waits for thee with open arms, desirous to offer His blood for thee to His Eternal Father with advantage. He calls thee from the state in which thou art, of habitual tepidity, not far from abandoning God. He calls thee to serve Him, in the practice of virtue with fervor. Why, then, delay to imitate the



good thief in his conversion, that thou mayest also imitate him in his hope?

My Jesus! let me never be of the number of those who neglect their duties and draw motives through presumption from the example of the good thief. I resolve to imitate him in his faith; and I believe that Thou art my God. To imitate him in his hope; and from Thee, who art my supreme Good, I hope for all good. To imitate him in his charity; and I love Thee above all things, and I am ready with Thy grace to give my life for Thee. In imitation of the good thief, I will carry, for Thy love, the cross of those tribulations which it shall please Thee to send me.

Here now, at this moment, without waiting any longer, I turn to Thee, my Jesus! with my whole heart, and with the plenitude of my soul I dedicate myself entirely to Thee. I repent that I have not sooner offered to Thee this sacrifice of my obedience, and through the multitude of Thy mercies, I beg of Thee to confirm in me what Thou hast wrought by Thy grace. Give me the humility of the good thief, to acknowledge myself for what I am, a miserable sinner. As long as I am humble, I may be assured that Thy graces will not be wanting to me.

I shall repent of having neglected, through mere sloth, so many good inspirations which I have had, and I shall resolve to be exact in the future in accepting them; for they are all graces, and benefits ineffable.

III. The crucified thieves are two in number. Whilst one is converted, the other persists in being an obstinate blasphemer. Both have been alike in vice, and they are alike in suffering; but they are not the same now in the disposition of their heart, and in their end. One is penitent, and is saved; the other is impenitent, and is damned. One goes to heaven before Peter, the other goes after Judas to hell. Of the two, one alone is saved, though Jesus Christ sheds His blood for both. And since in the one who is saved we have to admire the work of grace, which powerfully moves him in no ordinary way, let us not inquire why a more merciful grace is given to one than to the other, but

let us adore the judgments of God with submission and learn hence to fear.

This is a demonstration of what will occur at the Last Judgment. Jesus Christ on the tribunal of the cross, where He is between two thieves, having the good one on His right hand, the wicked at His left, gives heaven to the good, and condemns the wicked to hell. This He will also do when He comes to judge the living and the dead. He will place the elect on His right; the reprobates on His left hand; and calling the elect to eternal glory with Himself, He will send the wicked to eternal punishment. Let us reflect on our conscience, and confiding not in ourselves, let us humble ourselves under the decrees of His divine Majesty omnipotent.

Prostrate before Thee, O my God! I venerate the most high mysteries of Thy infinite wisdom, incomprehensible to my blind ignorance; and whilst I consider, on the one side, my innumerable sins, I have great reason to fear that I am already reputed by Thy justice amongst the vessels of ignominy; that is, the reprobate. But when I consider, on the other hand, O my crucified Jesus! the most bitter Passion that Thou hast suffered for me, I have good reason to hope that I am destined by Thy mercy to be one of the vessels of honor, who are Thy elect.

In the meantime, who knows whether I am one of the elect or of the reprobate? I fear and I hope; and this is the grace that I humbly ask of Thee: O my Saviour! keep me at the foot of Thy cross between hope and fear; so that hope may not make me vain, nor fear discourage me. Let humility confirm me in charity toward Thee and my neighbor. I fear Thee, O my Judge; and I love Thee, O my Father; I confide in Thee, that Thou wilt call me with the blessed, to Thy right hand.

I shall reject as diabolical thoughts regarding predestination, which cause me anxiety. Our Lord God never troubles, but consoles, and especially consoles the humble.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

## THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

I. THE Jews having ceased to afflict Jesus Christ with so many torments and so many insults, a new sorrow comes upon Him, which may be believed to be the most painful of all. This is the sight of His most holy Mother, who stands near, opposite the cross. But it can not be understood how much Jesus suffers in seeing Mary at the foot of His cross, if it is not comprehended how much Mary suffers in seeing Jesus crucified. Mary, who loves Jesus beyond the love of all mothers, suffers in her soul all that Jesus suffers in His body; and also by the union of their hearts all that He suffers in His Heart. Hence it is that as Jesus sees the immense grief of His Mother, an immense load of fresh grief, by means of His eyes, is heaped upon Him.

The eyes of the Son and of the Mother meet; and here thou must stop, my soul, fixing the glances of thy mind alternately, first upon this Son, then upon this Mother. What is Mary's grief on beholding Jesus, the blessed fruit of her womb, so afflicted! What sorrow is that of Jesus to behold His dear and immaculate Mother Mary in such sorrow! Jesus is the cross and the grief of Mary; Mary is the cross and the grief of Jesus. But let us not waste time in merely calling up tender affections, but let us reflect; what is the cause of the sorrows of this Son, and of this Mother? It is our sins that have caused the Passion of Jesus; and, consequently, the same have also occasioned the grief of Mary.

Ah! would that it were not, as too truly it is! I feel myself compelled by faith and conscience to confess the truth, that all the wounds Thou hast in Thy body, O Jesus! all the wounds thou hast in thy soul, O Mary! have been inflicted through me, and by my fault. Who then more than I ought to have feelings of grief and compassion for you? And yet, miserable and unhappy that I am, in meditating on your sorrows, how dry and cold am I, as if I were a statue of wood or plaster. My soul, why art thou so har-

dened as not to have any sense of compassion for this Man-God and His Mother in their anguish? O Mary, Mother of mercy! I turn to thee to implore thy most merciful protection, that I may be heard in the desire I have for sincere grief and compassion for thy passion and that of Thy Son, and of contrition and detestation of my sins. *Juxta crucem tecum stare, et me tibi sociare in planctu desidero.*<sup>1</sup>

The most blessed Virgin has offered her sorrows to the Eternal Father, begging of Him to render efficacious for me the sufferings of her Son. I shall recommend myself to her to be made worthy to partake in the fruit of His merits.

II. Whilst Jesus makes Himself known as Man by His filial affection toward His Mother, He shows Himself to be more than Man by the admirable tranquillity which He preserves in the depths of His sorrows. Let us observe how calmly on the cross He makes His testament. After leaving to His enemies the fervor of His prayers, and to the good thief Paradise, He leaves to Mary His beloved Apostle St. John, as a son, and to St. John as a mother, His own beloved Mother Mary. Let us likewise observe Mary, who, whilst she shows herself a woman by her maternal affection for her Son, also shows herself superior to her sex by the fortitude with which she bears the heavy load of her sorrows. She conducts herself as a mother, but with virtue worthy of the Mother of God. Her grief is most acute, and yet with what modesty and decorum she suffers, without giving the least mark of uneasiness or disturbance!

This is to have a will resigned to the divine Will. Jesus Christ wills nothing but what the Eternal Father wills; that is, the salvation of the world; and as Mary wills nothing else, hence it is that her mind is tranquil, though her natural sense is afflicted. It is in this resignation that happiness and perfection are found. Whence comes it, that from time to time I am interiorly disturbed and uneasy? Because I do not will all that God wills.

(<sup>1</sup>) Mine with thee be that sad station, there to watch the great Salvation,—*Plaint of Our Blessed Lady.*



O Jesus! O Mary! what misery is mine, to know my disease, to have a sweet and easy remedy, and not to choose to apply it? Oh, if in all things I allowed myself to be guided by the divine Will, and were resigned to His most wise dispensations, who would spend happier days in this life than I, by reason of the interior peace I should enjoy, and the firm hope I should have of a blessed eternity?

In future, I shall do this, and in adversities I shall adore with submission the divine Will. Though in certain things sense experiences repugnance, I shall reflect that God thus wills or thus ordains, and I will quickly humble myself, and be consoled by the thought that the divine Will is accomplished, not mine. This is my resolution; and since my will is inconstant, and allows itself to be turned about by my blind, insolent, and rebellious self-love, I beg of Thee, O Eternal Father! through the merits of Jesus and Mary, to unite me so closely to Thy holy will by Thy grace that no creature in the world may ever be able to separate me from it.

I shall watch over myself, and every time that I perceive myself perturbed about anything, I shall blame nothing but my self-love; and I shall recover interior peace by resigning myself to the will of God.

III. Let us consider Jesus Christ dividing the offices of piety between His beloved Mother and His beloved Apostle. He recommends St. John to Mary, that she may take him for her son; and to St. John He recommends Mary, that he may look upon her as his Mother. He would say: "By My death, you lose, O Mary! your Son; but behold! I leave you another in My place. You lose, O John! your Father, but behold! I leave you in My stead My Mother." To Mary it is a comfort to see the care that Jesus crucified has of her; but also what is her grief to see assigned to her, in exchange for the true God, a mere man! In like manner, it is an honor to St. John to have given to him the Mother of God, for his Mother; but what is his grief also to be deprived of such a Father! Oh, sweet bitterness! Oh, bitter sweetness!

Let us reflect that when Mary is given to St. John for a Mother, she is given for a Mother to us too, who are represented in the person of the holy Apostle. And as St. John was given to Mary for a son, so to the same Mother we also are given for children. Our true Mother is Mary, who gave birth to us spiritually at the foot of the cross, as she gave birth corporally in the stable to Jesus Christ; and who has undergone for us on Calvary those pains of childbirth, which she did not feel at Bethlehem. What a prodigy that a Virgin, remaining a Virgin, should become the fruitful Mother of so many children at one single birth! And what joy for us to have the Mother of God for our Mother!

O Jesus! most affectionate Father! what shall I render Thee for having left me for a Mother Thy most holy Mother? This is a benefit which the more I reflect upon, the greater I continually find it. For what graces may I not hope for from Thee, having near Thee Thy most holy Mother, who intercedes efficaciously for me? I am profoundly indebted to Thee, O my Jesus! and to correspond with my obligations, I beg of Thee, that, as from the cross Thou hast infused into Mary the spirit of a Mother toward me, Thou wouldst also communicate to me the spirit of a child toward her.

O Mary, overflowing with charity for me, I thank thee that thou hast deigned to receive me as thy child. Notwithstanding my vileness and unworthiness, I accept thee as a Mother, with most humble reverence, and beg of thee to be a Mother to me, without regard to my demerits. Show thyself a Mother to me by obtaining for me in my necessities those graces which thou seest will be most suitable and available for my salvation. Obtain for me the grace of true devotion, with which I may comport myself as becomes thy child.

I will be diligent in my devotions to the Blessed Virgin, and I will give her a singular satisfaction by loving chastity, in imitation of St. John, who on this account was the beloved disciple, and deserved to have Mary for Mother.

## CHAPTER LXX.

## JESUS CRUCIFIED COMPLAINS OF BEING ABANDONED.

I. AFTER Jesus Christ has been three hours on the cross, when His spirit seems quite spent, and His breath failing, He is suddenly heard to cry out with a loud voice. He cries out, not as if He were transported with impetuosity or impatience; for amidst the bitterness of His Passion, His sweet meekness has never been in the least perturbed. But He cries out in order to make it known that the violence of His pains, both in body and in soul, has now reached its height; and He cries out in this manner because it is thus foretold in the Scriptures that the Saviour of the world before His death should make known to God, with a loud voice, His overwhelming tribulations. He has never cried out in all His sufferings. But at present that He is about to die, He puts forth all the strength of His voice, and exclaims, like a mother in the pangs of childbirth.

Let us reflect, that whereas Our Lord became *our* Father when He created us, it is now on the cross that He becomes in like manner *our* Mother. For in accomplishing our Redemption, He has brought us forth to grace and made us His children. It cost Him little to be *our* Father in the Creation, but what throes of tormenting distress, like those of childbirth, has it not cost Him to be *our* Mother in the Redemption! Now it is, my soul, that thou shouldst consider Jesus as *thy* most loving Mother, who has brought thee forth from His womb to light. He can not do less than have mercy on thee. Thou shouldst also consider thyself as the child of His sorrows. For this reason He cries out so loud that His cry may be heard, and that the mystery may make more impression.

O my Jesus, my Father, my Mother, and my All, how great a debtor am I to Thy most tender mercy! To Thee I owe my soul, because Thou hast created and redeemed it. I am, moreover, a debtor to Thee for Thy own soul which Thou hast given for me. And how shall I be able to satisfy

my debts? For that of my soul, I have nothing nor can I give Thee anything but this same soul. Behold here I give it up to Thee. Take it, for it is all Thine. But for Thy soul, that has been in such tribulation on the cross, what shall I give Thee? I find nothing proportionate that is worthy to be offered in recompense, and I can only pray to Thee: My dear Jesus, who hast so abundantly satisfied the Eternal Father for the debts that I had contracted, make satisfaction also, I beseech Thee, to Thyself, for the debts that I have contracted with Thee. Grant by the efficacy of Thy merits that I may at least love Thee with the love due to One who to me is more than Father, more than Mother. Thou didst beget me, not to nature, but to grace; not to earth, but to heaven.

I know that I can only please God by loving Him; and yet I do not love Him, nor do I dispose myself for love. On the contrary, I offend and despise Him. Miserable that I am! I shall make acts of grief, repentance, and humiliation.

II. These are the words spoken with a loud voice by Jesus Christ: *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*<sup>1</sup> In saying them He does not complain as if the Divinity had separated Itself from Him; because the personal union of the Man-God has never been dissolved, nor has the Father ever been separated from the Son. He complains as a Man, as it has been foretold of Him, for it appears to the Humanity, afflicted in all Its senses, that He is abandoned in His extreme necessity, without help or comfort. And He thus complains, that it may be known to all that suffering is no pleasure to Him, because He is God; but that precisely because He is God, suffering in Him is more painful, His pain not being mitigated by one drop of divine consolation.

Who can understand the great mysteries contained in this cry of Our Saviour: a cry not of complaint, but of noble instruction? Reflect, my soul: Jesus Christ suffers this apparent abandonment; that is, a rigorous infliction of

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Matt. xxvii, 46.



the divine justice, in order that we may not be abandoned by the divine mercy. He laments not for Himself, but for us, showing His wounds for us to the Eternal Father, that we may not be abandoned by His grace. He sees that His Passion, which is superabundantly sufficient for the salvation of all, will be useful to few. This grieves Him to the Heart to find Himself alone with His few elect, on account of the many reprobate, who will be such through their own fault. Oh, how deeply affecting to Jesus is this anguish! But it is not so much over Him, as over us, that there is cause for weeping.

O Jesus! always sweet, and most sweet amidst Thy greatest bitterness, shall I too perhaps be one of that frightful number of the reprobate which has been Thy most bitter torment in Thy holy Passion? I fear; and my wickedness makes me fear. How many times have I deserved on account of my sins to be abandoned by Thee, O my God, with a real abandonment, both temporal and eternal! For my deplorable tepidity, I merit even now this horrible punishment. Nevertheless, since I live attached, O my Jesus! to Thy cross, I hope and I shall hope that there will be mercy for me.

I grieve for my sins. I grieve that I have not profited by Thy Passion, especially from my not profiting by the Sacraments. I implore Thee, O my Saviour! to assist me by the powerful helps of that grace which has been merited for me by Thee. Do not abandon me throughout the remainder of my life. Above all, do not abandon me at the hour of my death, that in life and in death and in eternity I may ever love Thee, and may be united to Thee by ties of indissoluble charity.

I shall fear the divine abandonment. Who knows whether this judgment does not threaten me for the first sin that I shall commit? Woe to me! if I sin but once more, for to be abandoned is the same as being irremediably lost.

## CHAPTER LXXI.

## JESUS CRUCIFIED COMPLAINS OF THIRST.

I. THE bowels, the bones, and the throat of Jesus Christ being parched, by the violence of His pains, and by the shedding of so much blood, He says in a tone that would move to compassion, that He thirsts. In this manner He manifests not only the great drought that torments Him, but also His extreme poverty, as if He would say: Behold your God, who created seas and rivers, and refreshed a million Hebrews in the desert, to what a state He is reduced, not having two drops of water for His own refreshment, and being ready to die of thirst. And what is done for His relief? A sponge dipped in vinegar is applied to His mouth, that in imbibing it He may suffer mockery and torture. Who ever heard of cruelty so barbarous that to a poor sufferer, who is dying, vinegar should be given for a drink, and a single draught of water denied him, which is not refused even to beasts?

Have compassion, O my soul, on Jesus, upon whom new sufferings are heaped until His last breath; and acknowledging even for this reason that He is the Saviour of the world, in whom are verified the Prophetic oracles, reflect on this word *Sitio*, which is short but mysterious. What does He mean, that He should complain of thirst, and not of so many other grievous sufferings? Let us ask Him with reverence, what sort of thirst is His. Then we shall understand that it is the ardor of charity which more than all burns Him interiorly. He loves and longs for the salvation of souls, and after drinking of the chalice of His Passion even to the dregs, He says that He thirsts to drink with avidity another, even more bitter, were this necessary to save them.

I admire, O my Jesus! this thirst, which is caused by Thy most ardent love; and after exerting my weakness repeatedly to thank Thee for all that Thou hast suffered for me, I now thank Thee for the desire Thou hast had of suffering for my salvation much more than nature could

bear. Moreover, I thank Thee for the immense merits that Thou hast added to the treasury of Thy Passion by this thirst.

But how can I imitate Thee on this point; since suffering is too disagreeable to my human nature, and I have not the least particle of that charity which acts while it burns? My God! who hast suffered so much, and desired to suffer for me, inflame me with Thy love, in order that in me a real thirst of suffering may be excited for Thee. Adversities are not wanting in this life. What I require is only that loving willingness to suffer, which gives merit to sufferings. And who can create in me this willingness but Thou?

I shall make acts of sorrow for having been until the present an imitator of the Jews, in giving Jesus Christ vinegar to drink, by my evil life.

II. Amongst the cruelties invented to torment Jesus Christ must be reckoned this of the vinegar which is given Him to drink in His thirst. Let us attend to the mystery. His thirst is a thirst for souls, caused by the charity that inflames His Heart; and what astonishes us is, that seeing, as He does, so many millions of souls that will be saved by His merits, all these are not enough to satisfy Him. He sees that the vintage to be gathered in the vineyard of His Church will be plentiful, but He grieves, nevertheless, that it will still be small, and insufficient to assuage His thirst, inasmuch as He sees that there will be many who will, in spite of His Passion, prefer to be damned.

Reflect, my soul: If Thou hadst been on Calvary when Jesus said that He was thirsty, wouldst thou not have willingly given Him a little water? Know, then, that thou art yet in time to cool His burnings. He says to thee from the cross, what He said to the Samaritan woman at the well, *Give me to drink*,<sup>1</sup> but understand that He thirsts for thee, and that by making known to thee this thirst, He would wish, that as there came on the Samaritan woman a thirst after Him, the like thirst should also come on thee.

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John iv, 7.

Dost thou, then, wish to give refreshment to Our Saviour in His thirst? Thirst after Him who invites thee to drink at His fountain of eternal life. Thirst after Jesus, who alone can satiate thee, and save thee, and thus Jesus also, in His thirst, will be satisfied with thee.

Ah, my Lord! I am wholly confused, and I know not what to say, when thinking of the great thirst Thou hast for me, who am muddy water, full of mire; and when I reflect upon myself, who thirst for anything rather than for Thee, from whom flow torrents of blissful delights. Behold what manner of thirst is mine. A thirst of vicious concupiscence, a thirst of the flesh, of the earth and the world. And what else is this my thirst, compared to Thine, but sour vinegar?

Ah, my crucified Jesus! give me that thirst which Thou desirest I should have; a thirst to imitate Thee in humility, charity, patience, obedience, and so many other virtues. Oh, happy me, if I may have this thirst for fulfilling in all things with Thee the will of the Eternal Father! Thus I shall delight Thy Heart, give refreshment to Thy thirst, and deserve to hear, on the Day of Judgment, that sweet voice say to the elect: *Come, ye blessed of My Father, for I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink.*<sup>1</sup> O Eternal Father! I offer Thee the thirst of Thy only-begotten Son; and through that loving desire which Thou hast that He should be imitated by all, grant to me also the grace of imitating Him in this His holy thirst.

I am determined to save myself. In order to save myself, I shall imitate Jesus Christ in His holy virtues. This is the thirst that I ought to have, and I shall enter into details, making practical resolutions of such and such virtues.

(1) St. Matt. xxv, 34, 35.



## CHAPTER LXXII.

## LAST WORDS OF JESUS CRUCIFIED.

I. JESUS CHRIST, having reached the end of His life, makes a public declaration that He has fulfilled all that was appointed Him to do, and this not in part only, but absolutely, without there being anything that He ought to have done, and has not done. He protests that He has executed the whole of that which divine wisdom has ordained for Him, all that which divine justice and divine mercy required from Him; the whole of the truth and charity which had been laid upon Him in obedience to His Eternal Father. He had already declared that He had nothing at heart but to accomplish the work of God, which is the Redemption of the world, in conformity with the figures and prophecies of the Scriptures. Now He makes known that He has accomplished and perfected the whole of the Passion, of the Redemption, and likewise of the Law, for our example; so that since nothing more has to be done on His part for our eternal salvation it remains for Him only to die.

Oh, happy he who can say, when he comes to die, that he has fulfilled his duties, in the observance of a Christian life! This is being imitators of Jesus Christ in His perseverance, and it is to this imitation that we are bound, by being humble, charitable, and obedient, not in some things, or for a time, but in all things and always, till our last breath. For what avails it to begin a good life if we do not intend to persevere in it? It is recorded of many, that after having reached the summit of sanctity, they have fallen away, and gone headlong to destruction; and as final perseverance is a particular grace, which is not given to all, who knows whether it will be granted to us? There is reason to fear; but there is also reason to hope.

And in whom can I more securely place my trust than in Thee, my crucified Jesus? As to myself, I am aware of my own instability and weakness, that I am unable to keep a resolution from one day to another, and after having so

often fallen and fallen again into vice in time past, how can I promise myself strength to persevere in virtue for the future? I place all my confidence in Thee, my God, my Saviour! I firmly hope, by Thy assistance, to spend my life in faithfully serving and obeying Thee, and I would rather die than offend Thee.

Great is the grace I ask for, when I beg for perseverance in Thy holy service to the end. But I ask it through the merits of that unwavering perseverance that Thou hast practised in the endurance of so painful and bitter a Passion. Thou, my Jesus! who givest me the desire of a good life, strengthen me likewise, and so establish me in good that I may never under any consideration depart from it again.

In order to obtain the gift of perseverance I shall recommend myself to God. I will trust in God, and shall correspond with the grace of God by doing violence to myself.

II. From the perfect fulfilment of all that had been predicted by the Prophets, and by Jesus Christ Himself, we may infer, that as nothing now remains to be verified but the prophecy of the Last Judgment, that also shall infallibly be verified, and when this Man-God, crucified by the Jews, shall come in the majesty of a Judge, He will again say, *Consummatum est!*<sup>1</sup> The world is at an end; all time is at an end. The time is over for doing evil. The time is past for doing good; and it is now at the opening of eternity that a most exact account of all is to be given. *Consummatum est!* All is finished, as well for the just as for the wicked. For the wicked, pleasures and diversions are at an end; for the just, tribulations and crosses are over. Now is the time for each one to receive according to his deserts, eternal glory or eternal punishment.

But what will take place at the end of the world will also take place at the end of my life. For at the moment of my death all will be at an end for me; the world, time, and the things of time. *Consummatum est.* Jesus Christ shall say to me, placing before me His holy Gospel and His

(<sup>1</sup>) St. John xix, 30.

sacred Passion. Behold how on My side, I have done all for thy eternal salvation. Shall I be able to say, *Consummatum est!* as having corresponded, on my side, with His graces? Reflect, my soul, how hast thou spent thy life up to this present time? How hast thou kept the law; how the counsels of Jesus Christ? How hast thou applied thyself to prayer? How hast thou frequented the Sacraments? An account must be given of all to the Crucified; and thou, what shalt thou answer?

Ah, my God! in examining myself, I am quite confounded, for I see nothing in myself but sins, and I have no intention either of detesting them or of grieving for them. What then and how much greater will be my confusion on that day! My Jesus, my Redeemer, my Judge! I implore Thee both now and for the time to come to glorify Thy mercy over me; that mercy which I have so frequently and so wickedly abused.

It is true that I have spent my time in vanity and iniquity; but is there no remedy? I shall hope that there is; because I know positively that there is; it is to be found in love. There is no sin, however grievous and enormous it may be which Thou wilt not forgive him who loves Thee, and it is in this love that all perfection is contained. Grant, therefore, O my God! that the little span of life that remains to me may be wholly employed in loving Thee with all the power of my mind and heart; and thus at the hour of death I shall be enabled, to Thy glory and to my eternal joy, to exclaim, *Consummatum est!* All is finished; since the end of all is Thy love.

I shall frequently make acts of the love of God. I will sacrifice to this love some particular passion, in union with the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

III. Jesus Christ, having drunk the chalice of the Passion which He had seen in the garden, and nothing now remaining to complete His exact obedience but that last draught, which is to die, enters upon His agony, showing all those signs that nature is wont to give in one at the point of death. When, behold! all at once raising His head and

eyes to Heaven, with the same vigor of soul as if He were in perfect health, He calls on His Eternal Father. He speaks not as a man in mortal agony, but as the Man-God that He is, with a clear loud voice heard by all, even in hell.

In calling God His Father, He declares that He is God the Son, on the point of returning to the same Father, from whose bosom He went forth when He came into the world. He cries out with an extraordinary, miraculous voice, as One who is omnipotent, that it may be seen that He would not die, if He did not choose to die, and that, if He dies, it is not through violence or necessity, but by a free and spontaneous act of His will, that He accomplishes by His death the sacrifice of His most precious life. On hearing the sound of this voice, the centurion reflects that it is a prodigy, unwonted, superhuman; and he confesses Jesus Christ to be Man-God. Let us also reflect: If the voice of this Man-God, now that He is dying, is so powerful and penetrating, what shall it be when He shall judge the whole world? Break forth, O my soul! into acts of faith, thanksgiving and compunction.

I firmly believe that Thou, O my Jesus! art the true Son of God, and as Thou hast on the cross voluntarily given Thy life for me, so I by Thy grace offer myself, as prepared on every occasion when necessary to give my life and blood to confess Thy Divinity, which is an undoubted article of faith. I believe in Thee, O my God! and I profoundly adore Thee and I thank Thee for that loving will with which Thou hast accepted death for me. If I am saved, as I hope to be, I shall be forever indebted to Thy death for eternal life.

But how can I be grateful to Thee, now, O my crucified Jesus? I read in Thy wounds the wishes of Thy Heart, that Thou desirest, not only to show in Thy Passion how immense is Thy mercy, but moreover to diffuse the sweet influences of this same mercy and to behold the fruits of it. See, then, my soul at Thy feet, offering Thee will for will: that is, an ardent will to love Thee in return for that will with which Thou hast so ardently loved me. Ah, Thou!



who dost prevent me with so great mercy, by the same mercy assist me to make myself worthy of that mercy, to a share in which Thou art expecting me.

I shall reflect on the graces and mercies which Jesus Christ continually grants me by the merits of His Passion, and I shall animate myself to correspondence, as a preparation for the account that I shall have to render on the Day of Judgment.

IV. The last words uttered by Jesus Christ with vehement fervor are these, which have been already pronounced by the Prophet, *Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.*<sup>1</sup> But why does He say this, since His spirit was already recommended to God, by being inseparably united to the Person of the Word? Let no one suppose that He recommends Himself through any necessity. He speaks in this manner to show the intimate confidence that exists between Him as a Son and His Father. He speaks thus depositing in His Father's hands the souls of the faithful, who are to be brought to life by His death, and who are one spirit with Him. He speaks in this way in order that He may declare that our souls are no longer in the hands of the devil, since He has consigned them into His Father's hands, thus at one and the same time instructing the Church, and leaving to us an example to cultivate sentiments like His at the end of our lives.

Let us reflect how our divine Saviour, though burdened with so many sorrows, has never been idle, and has been pleased to assist us by His example and doctrine even to the last stage of His life. Therefore, with the same desire of imitating Him, let us beg Him to make us worthy thus to recommend ourselves also at the hour of our death. Oh, what a beautiful death, to breathe forth our soul into the hands of our God! But in order to enjoy this happiness we must prepare ourselves, by resigning ourselves now into the hands of God, and conforming ourselves to His will, in our respective states of life. For what confidence can we

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke xxiii, 46.

have at death that God will accept the recommendation of a soul that has lived without the love and fear of God?

Ah, my Jesus! now it is that I must recommend myself to Thee, and to Thee with my whole heart do I recommend myself, placing myself in those hands which Thou hast extended on the cross for me. Loving hands, that reject no one who comes to you! Strong hands, so strong that no one can pluck from your grasp even one of those souls that are consigned to you! To you I abandon myself, leaving myself to be directed by you as it pleases you, in the conduct of my life. I know neither the time nor the manner of my death. It may, perhaps, be that I shall die without being able to say a word. To Thee, then, O my Jesus! I recommend at this present moment my soul, which is not mine, but Thine, purchased by Thee with Thy blood.

Keep it in Thy hands, closely bound with the cords of charity that it may not escape Thee. Defend it from the infernal enemies who will endeavor to surprise it in its passage out of this world, and to throw it into despair by the remembrance of its past sins. *Jesu, sis mihi Jesu!* This is the prayer that I make to Thee now, for the hour of my death. Assist me by Thy grace, that living in obedience to Thee, I may thus pass from Thy hands into those of Thy Father, to whom Thou hast commended me, in commending to Him Thy own spirit.

To safeguard myself from all danger of an unprovided death, I shall every day make the recommendation of my soul; and I shall say with devotion to Jesus crucified those words that He addressed to His Father, *Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.*<sup>1</sup>

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## CHAPTER LXXIII.

### THE DEATH OF JESUS CRUCIFIED.

I. AFTER hanging three hours on the cross, agonizing in body and desolate in mind, Jesus Christ at last dies.

(<sup>1</sup>) St. Luke xxiii, 46.

He dies neither later nor earlier than that precise moment in which with full liberty, conformably to the eternal decree, He gives His assent to die. Hence, before He dies, He bows His head as if to accept the enjoined obedience, and with humble reverence to thank the Father, who is pleased to recall Him to Himself. He bows His head to give a sign for death to come, for it never would have come if He had not been pleased. Thus He makes it known that in His whole life He has never done anything by force, nor has ever suffered any pain by force, nor is there any one who can make Him die by force. He is in all things and everywhere absolute Master of Himself.

Fix thy eyes, my soul, on this Man-God, who is dying; and see how He, who on entering into the world was the most beautiful of all men, is now in quitting it, the most unsightly of all, having scarcely the features of man. Look well for the last time, whilst He is still alive, on the only-begotten Son of the Most High, immense, infinite in His adorable perfections, how He gradually droops and dies for thee—a vile little creature—who hast nothing of thine own but thine own wickedness alone. Art thou not horrified, and dost thou not tremble in thinking that a God dies for thee, moved solely by the love He bears thee? Let us reflect with attentive faith on these words, “Jesus Christ, my Saviour, dies for me a sinner.”

O my Jesus! what manner of love is this, that has led Thee even to quit Thy divine life on a tree for me? Though I am a most unworthy sinner, I feel myself animated by this love to a very great confidence; and it seems to me that Thou inclinest Thy head as if to give, in departing from the world, a loving kiss to Thy elect. I take courage and approach Thee with confidence, that Thou wilt not despise me in my unworthiness. Most sweet Jesus! who hast no place whereon to rest Thy head, allow Thyself to be assisted, and be pleased and permit that I should bear it up for Thee and let it rest upon me.

I compassionate Thee in the most bitter pain which Thy pure soul experiences in separating from Thy pure body;

and since Thou willingly sacrificest the love which the soul has for the body, to the love which Thou hast for my soul, I implore Thee to assist me with those abundant graces that Thou hast merited for me in Thy last agony, that I may continually grow more and more fervent in Thy love. Oh, that I might die with Thee, and for Thee, fastened to Thy cross! But grant me at least, that until the hour of death I may constantly love Thee; and when it shall please Thee that I should die, may I breathe out my soul, devoted to Thy love, in Thy embraces, to love and enjoy Thee forever and ever. Amen.

I shall embrace the Crucifix, and shall make repeated acts of love to it, with the most intense fervor I am able to command, as if I were in my last agony, and that what I now do may be reckoned by anticipation as done then.

II. Bending His head toward us, and raising His Heart to His Eternal Father, Jesus Christ makes His last most fervent oblation of Himself, praying the divine Majesty to accept it. On account of His superabundant merits, He is heard and immediately consummates His death—His voluntary and most perfect sacrifice—breathing forth His spirit and consigning it into the hands of His Father as an odor of sweetness. Who is there that can fall asleep when he chooses, as easily as Jesus Christ died when He willed to do so? He thus shows Himself to be what He is, true Man, inasmuch as He dies; and Man-God, who dies because He chooses to die. He would not die, if He did not will it.

But, my soul, should we be sad, or should we rejoice at this death? At the moment that Jesus dies, the divine justice is fully satisfied for the sins of the world; human nature is reconciled to God and at peace with Him; the New Testament begins to have force in the new Church; and heaven, which was closed and could only be opened by Our Saviour's death, opens to us. O death, replete with consolation for us! But as we also know that Jesus dies for our sins, and that we are the cause of the ending of His life, more precious than all the lives of the world, how in-



dignant, at the same time, ought we to be for having occasioned so great an evil!

Love and sorrow are the two things, O my Jesus! that I owe Thee. How then can I come into Thy presence, and not blush, since I am so neglectful of my obligations? I ought to love Thee, and I do not love Thee! What kind of heart is mine, which is not touched either by the Passion and death that Thou hast suffered for me, or by the multitude of benefits which have accrued to me from Thy Passion and death? I ought to grieve for my malice, so cruel against Thee, and I do not grieve. What obduracy is mine, which neither breaks nor is softened by so much blood shed by Thee?

Since I have neither grief nor love, I humble myself before Thee, O my crucified Jesus; and regarding myself unworthy of Thy graces, I beg of Thee the kind permission at least to remain here at Thy feet to adore Thee and to thank Thee for the excess of Thy charity in having chosen to die upon the cross, Thou who art without sin, for me a miserable sinner, who am the vilest of sinners. If I do not love Thee, I desire to love Thee. If I do not grieve for my sins, I desire to grieve bitterly. Ah! assist my desires; not regarding my demerits, but Thy merits. I live in the confidence of these immense merits, which, in Thy death, Thou hast accumulated especially for me. Ah! before I die, make me love, as I should, Thy infinite goodness, and moreover grieve, as I should, with true contrition for my sins.

I shall consider it a bad sign to be so tepid and dry, without feeling, in meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ. And as dissipation of mind and heart is the cause of this, I shall endeavor to obtain recollection in order to be filled with compunction.

III. Let us contemplate Jesus Christ crucified and dead, under the circumstances mentioned in the Gospels. He is suspended by three nails in the air, and He has not in His most sacred body one single sense that has not endured its special dolorous passion. Although He is dead, He is still God, for the Divinity is not separated from His body; and

as He is an eternal and immortal God, reduced to the condition of mortal Man, and to dying on a cross for us, above all things His excessive charity must be pondered. It would have been a very great action, which, humanly speaking, nothing could surpass, if He had died to save His friends, who are the just. But He died also for His enemies, for sinners, for the wicked. He died to give life to those who gave Him death. Hence, how exceedingly to be admired is this charity so rare, superexcellent, worthy of a God, and truly appertaining to none but God!

Let us pause to consider this point. Jesus Christ has died for sinners; therefore, He has also died for me. I am obliged to believe this article of faith, and in proportion as my faith in it must be firm and undoubting, so my hope must be constant and unwavering. I commit a mortal sin if I do not believe that Jesus Christ died for my eternal salvation. Moreover, I also commit a mortal sin if I do not hope to be saved by His death. Suppose I were a sinner a hundred thousand times greater than I am, what matters this? Where is the soul so loaded with sins that can not be saved by the death of Jesus Christ? Precisely because death is an extreme weakness, our Man-God has chosen it in order to exercise by it an act of superhuman and almighty power. Let us, then, believe and hope in Jesus Christ; but let us also love Him; for if charity is wanting, neither faith nor hope will be sufficient.

O Jesus! dead on the cross for me, I am indebted to Thy charity for my entire being. Why, then, should I not love Thee with all my strength, since Thou art my salvation, my hope, and my life? How can I help loving Thee, when, if I think ever so little of Thee, I feel the terrors of my guilty conscience removed, and my heart take courage, comforted by the sweetness of Thy unctions? Dear Jesus, dear Jesus! I render Thee thanks for Thy death; and I love Thee above all things. I shall in all things endeavor to please Thee, and to labor for Thy glory. I desire to imitate Thee in crucifying myself and dying to myself for Thy love; as Thou hast been crucified and hast died for my love. But

to Thee it belongs, O my God! to give efficacy to my desires by Thy grace. I desire that with Thee may be crucified my memory, my mind, and my will. That with Thee may be crucified my thoughts, my affections, my senses.

To crucify myself means to mortify myself, and to die to myself is to deny my desires after property, sensuality and honor. To put this in practice, I shall enter into the details of my own wants.

IV. In His death, as well as in His Passion, Jesus Christ has made Himself known to be Man-God. Scarcely has He breathed forth His soul, proving Himself to be Man, than He proves Himself to be God also, by stupendous miracles. And after we have compassionated His distress, He proposes to us His Majesty to be admired; while the whole world is convulsed at His death. The sun is eclipsed, the air is filled with darkness, it becomes like night at mid-day, the veil of the sanctuary is torn, the whole earth quakes, rocks are rent and tombs opened.

These are the signs of nature, which is conscious and declares to us that He who is dead is not a mere Man, but God. Although three are crucified, no one attributes the working of these miracles to any but Jesus Christ, who alone is known to be God. All had been already written by the Prophets, and He Himself had foretold that when He was raised aloft on the cross He would draw all creatures to give testimony of His Divinity. But, my soul, what a spectacle, that when Heaven and earth are moved to sympathize with the Author of nature, thou art still so blind and hard! Behold, admire and adore God, crucified and dead for thee, a vile and lost sinner.

Oh, what a subject of immense confusion for me! Thou didst not die, O my Jesus! for the sake of senseless animals, and yet the latter, at Thy death, gave evident marks of confusion and horror, as to make it appear that they were conscious of it. Thou hast died for me, to free me from the slavery of the devil and from the pains of hell. Thou hast died for me, to restore me to grace, to make me again a child of God, capable of inheriting His eternal glory.

And yet for Thee I have no feeling of humanity or love ; as though I were indebted to Thee for nothing.

My God ! I adore Thy mysteries ; but if Thou hast ordered that rocks should be split at Thy death, to signify also that by the grace Thou hast merited for us in dying the hardness of our hearts should be softened ; oh ! shower down these graces upon me, and give me a contrite heart, to cry for mercy here at the foot of the cross, and at least to lament my misery, that from Thy Passion and death, which are most efficacious in sanctifying souls, I do not gather the slightest fruit of sanctity. Ah ! if I had been a stone, when Thou didst die on Calvary, O my Jesus ! my hardness would have been broken. Whereas it having pleased Thy infinite goodness to bestow upon me the being of man, who knows and understands, and can animate his own affections, I remain obdurate, and the contemplation of Thy death makes no impression on me. Have mercy on unhappy me, O my God ! Make me at least comprehend that Thou hast died for my sins, that I may bitterly deplore these sins.

To obtain compunction and devotion, an excellent means is humiliation. I shall ask pardon for my tepidity and sloth, by which I render myself more and more unworthy of celestial favors.

## CHAPTER LXXIV.

### JESUS CRUCIFIED PIERCED IN THE SIDE BY A LANCE.

I. THE Jews, thinking that Jesus Christ will not die so soon, request of Pilate that His legs may be broken, so that He may die suffering under this new torment. In order to gain their end, after murdering the innocent Victim contrary to the Law, they show themselves zealous for legal observance, saying that they have a scruple in leaving the criminals on the cross, through reverence for the approaching solemnity. Accordingly, a troop of soldiers comes, and



having killed the thieves with rods of iron, they see that Jesus Christ is dead, and they do not touch Him. However, one of them, more cruel and impious than the others, thinking that He may yet be alive, to please the Jews, who continue to insult Him, though dead, pierces His breast with a lance.

Here we must reflect, how the Jews themselves, by not breaking the bones of Jesus Christ, but by insulting and wounding Him even after death, fulfil against their will the prophecies long before made concerning Him. Still they are so blind and hardened by their own malice that they become even more infuriated against Him. But the charity of Jesus is enkindled in His deified body, though the soul is separated from it! He beholds their atrocious perfidy, and has patience. By His graces, He interiorly calls them to penance, and expects them with mercy. My soul, is not this what Jesus has a million of times practised toward thee? Thou continuing to offend Him by thy sins, and He continuing with mercy to bear with thee and to call thee?

O most merciful Jesus! now I comprehend why in the figure of the Paschal Lamb it was foretold of Thee that not even one bone of Thy bones should be broken. This was to denote that whatever Thy enemies might do to torment Thee and to load Thee with insults, the soundness of Thy virtues should never be infringed upon; and humility, patience, obedience, and above all charity, should in Thee be always entire and perfect. My omnipotent God, God of justice and mercy! who breakest to pieces the virtues of the proud, who endeavor to maintain themselves by vanity, and dost defend and support the virtues of the humble, who confide in Thee, ah! take from me pride which is so hateful to Thee. Grant me true and holy humility by which I shall be made worthy of being protected and safeguarded by Thee, and strengthened in all the virtues that are requisite for my eternal salvation.

Establish, above all things, charity in my heart, to wish well, for Thy love, to every person that does evil to me;

and as it has also been predicted that every one that shall behold Thee wounded in Thy sacred side shall weep and mourn over Thee, grant that the prophecy may be accomplished in me. Make me fix my thoughts on this wound, with sentiments of compassion and compunction, placing also in it, my hope in all my necessities. O loving wound! in thee I confide and hope to obtain the grace to become a saint and to enjoy that blissful glory that is prepared for the saints.

I shall apply myself to practise humility, which is the means by which the bones of the soul, that is, virtues are preserved. Without it no virtue can exist. I shall continually implore Jesus Christ to give it to me.

II. Jesus Christ would not be wounded with the lance whilst He was alive, that no one might think that He had died by force from the violence of the stroke. He died precisely because He willed it, and His will having been moved by love only, He has mysteriously disposed that His side should afterward be opened, that by this external wound we may enter in and behold the deep wound that love had already made, with another sharp lance, in His Heart.

See, my soul, how the point of the lance with a violent thrust opens His breast, is buried in it, and passes through His Heart, from side to side. See the wound on His right side, large enough to admit the hand. See His Heart also open, and enter mentally therein; for the visible wound is made purposely that we may go in, and may comprehend the other invisible wound of love. From this wound of love have proceeded the other wounds of His head, His hands, His feet, and of His entire body. Why has He suffered the scourges, thorns, nails, and death, if not to satisfy His love, most vehemently longing for our salvation? Ah! is there any one that can dwell on the thought of this most loving Heart and not feel himself obliged to love It in return?

But this is not all. Since my sins cause me to fear, and my vileness prevents me from approaching Thy divine Majesty; O my Jesus! how good Thou art, Thou hast bowed

Thy head, as if to give me a sign to call and invite me to enter into Thy Heart, and to show me that simply because I fear the enormity of my sins, and Thy offended justice, it is here that I may take shelter and find mercy, redemption, pardon and salvation. How strong and how great a confidence Thy goodness gives me!

I come, O my Saviour! because in Thy wound I see the door open; I come and enter in; but I tremble with reverence, and I entreat Thy charity to admit me. Where in the whole world is there an abode of so great peace, tranquillity and security, as in this Heart? What sweetness and joy are experienced in dwelling therein! O most loving Jesus! here fix my dwelling, and here keep it evermore in the tabernacle of Thy love. Most pure Heart, most sweet Heart, most august Throne of the Divinity, Sanctuary of charity, with all possible reverence I salute and adore Thee! Thou art the Fountain of grace, by Thee I hope that those graces will be given me which are most necessary and efficacious for obtaining eternal salvation.

I shall acquire devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, wherein His will abides by the constant exercise of love for me. I shall grieve for my ingratitude, and shall make continual protestations that I will be grateful to Him.

III. Jesus Christ did not feel the stroke of the lance, because He was dead. But since all has been fulfilled that had been foretold regarding Him, it is now more than ever, that in Mary, His most holy Mother, is literally accomplished that prophecy, which was made to her by the holy old man Simeon in the Temple, that her soul should be pierced by a sword. The soul of Mary is in the Heart of Jesus by a most profound sense of compassion; and thus, whilst the cruel weapon passes through the Heart of Jesus, it penetrates the soul of Mary. Therefore, she is more than a martyr, for she suffers in her soul; and mental suffering is more acute than bodily pain.

Mary has suffered immense grief in the Crucifixion of her Son; great grief on beholding Him crucified and seeing Him also die. By love she was entirely in her Son, and she

suffered all that her Son suffered. But the sorrow that she experiences at that cruel stroke of the lance is excessive; because it is a grief added to the other griefs, whereas in Jesus Christ it is only a wound added to His other wounds.

Sympathize, O my soul! with the Queen of Martyrs, and reflect. Why is Mary afflicted? Because she loves Jesus: and because her love is exceeding great, exceeding great is also her affliction. Why hast thou not likewise at least some slight feeling of compassion for Jesus? It must of necessity be inferred, because thou dost not love Him. O my unhappy soul, in order to cause thee to conceive some degree of love for Jesus, neither His most bitter Passion, nor His most painful death, nor the stroke of the lance itself, which wounded His most loving Heart after death, will suffice! But since thy heart is so hard and cruel, look well at His side. Jesus has willed that this wound should be made in it, because by it He offers thee His Heart. And will it not be an excellent means of loving Jesus to love Him with His Heart, which is also thine?

O consoling thought! In truth, O my Jesus! thou art my Head; and if the eyes of the head, because they belong to my head, are my eyes, shall not Thy Heart be mine, since it is the Heart belonging to a Head which is mine? I have never thought of this. But now that I do think of it, what happiness for me to have found a Heart with which, O my Jesus, I shall be able worthily to pray to Thee and to love Thee! With this Heart, then, which is Thine and mine, ah! grant that I may love Thee. Virgin Mary, intercede for me; for I am so wretched that I shall misuse even the Heart of Jesus Christ Himself. Grant that my heart may belong entirely to Jesus, as the Heart of Jesus is all mine.

By the Heart of Jesus, we understand His loving will, and to love God with the Heart of Jesus, is to have a will in everything conformable with Him, and resigned and obedient to the will of God.

IV. When Jesus Christ had received the wound in His side, there came out from it immediately blood and water.



by which, in the first place, He showed Himself to be really Man, composed of fluids like any other man. At the same time, He gave proof that He was God, by this miracle; since however many may be the wounds given to a dead body, blood is never seen to flow from them, nor even water. This must be called a privileged wound. On which account, moreover, the Evangelist does not give it the name of a wound, but of an opening. Since it is to all of us, as it were, a gate of life which is opened in order that the Sacraments may issue from it—symbolized by the water and blood—to make holy Church fruitful of elect children, and to confer on the predestined eternal salvation.

Oh, how great is our obligation to Jesus Christ for this wound, which, though it gives Him no pain, was, nevertheless, meritorious in Him, as having been foreseen and accepted and offered to His Eternal Father. From this wound came forth the blood of my Redemption to satisfy the divine justice for me, and from it likewise flowed the water that sanctified me in my Baptism, and which has so often washed me from my sins by Confession. From this wound issue all the graces, benedictions and mercies that I can desire for my temporal and eternal happiness. O most sacred wound! It has been opened to me, that I may enter into it, as into the Ark of Noe, and may not perish with the reprobate, but be saved. But woe is me! This wound will one day be again shown to me by Jesus Christ; and that perverse will of mine, by which I have refused to shelter myself in it, will be called to judgment.

My Jesus, my God! I accuse myself now of all my iniquities. I repent of them, and ask Thee for mercy, that they may be forgiven by Thee as my Saviour, and may not be brought forward to be judged by Thee when Thou shalt be my Judge. Wash me with this water; and ever more and more cleanse and purify me with this blood. I desire to enter in where Thou invitest me, and to take up my permanent abode in Thy Heart. But how clean, how pure ought I to be, to dwell in that place of sanctity! Restore, then, to my soul, innocence by this water, and charity by

this blood ; so that it may be made worthy of Thee, by being made like to Thee. Through the merits of this wound, O my Jesus ! succor me in all dangers both in life and at my death. In this wound I place my trust. If it is an effect of my wickedness and thus causes me confusion, it is more-over an effect of Thy mercy that brings me consolation.

I shall not be one of those who think they have prayed well because they have prayed with some tenderness of feeling. May the fruit of the wound in the side and Heart of Jesus be that I may do the will of Jesus.

## CHAPTER LXXV.

### JESUS CHRIST TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS.

I. JESUS CHRIST is no sooner dead than the efficacy of His merits begins to be immediately perceived in the admirable effects produced ; as the centurion of the troop that led Him to death, and the soldiers who were with Him on service, leave the darkness of heathenism, give glory to the Crucified and confess Him to be the true Son of God. Moreover, all the people who had assembled for the sight depart from Calvary beating their breast, for sorrow and regret at having taken part in so unjust a condemnation. In the place in which but a short time since they mocked and insulted Him, is now heard nothing but tears and cries of repentance.

The women, who stood afar off on account of the fear they had of the Jews, now courageously draw near to the cross, to offer their adorations. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who had been disciples of Jesus Christ in secret, while He was alive, glory in being of the number of His faithful, now that He is dead. All the multitude, who a while ago esteemed Him as a malefactor, now acknowledge Him just and innocent. Whence such a change ? Jesus is dead ; and it is after His death that His kingdom

is extended and established in men's souls, which He ravishes by the mighty sweetness of His graces.

Reflect, my soul, how so many of those who during His life had refused to believe both in His doctrine and in His miracles, now that He is dead, surrender themselves to Him with sentiments of faith and compunction. Do thou also come with them; and though thy coming be late, Jesus Christ will nevertheless receive thee, as He receives all that come, at whatever hour it may be. And what is the meaning of this, that even now after the death of thy Saviour, thou art still so hard? Come with humility, judging thyself unworthy of His graces on account of thy sins. Who knows but through this humility thou wilt gain all the graces thou desirest; since all the evil lies in thy pride alone?

Behold, O my Jesus! at Thy feet, a sinful soul, worse than the Jews or the Gentiles. They knew not for whom or wherefore Thou didst die; and yet they shed tears of penance at Thy death. I know by undoubted faith that Thou art dead for me on account of my sins. And yet where are my groans or sighs of compunction? What hardened wickedness is mine! I can not say, O my God, that Thou refusest me Thy graces; but I must say that for the graces which Thou givest me I am ungrateful and rebellious. And what woes have I not reason to apprehend? Ah, most merciful Jesus! overcome my obduracy; take possession of me for Thyself; soften and inflame me with Thy love; so that there may be nothing left, whether of vain fears or human respect, to draw me from obedience to Thee. Make me gather from Thy death that fruit which, until now, I have failed to gather from Thy holy Passion.

I shall examine if there is in me any human respect, through which, on certain occasions, I do not dare to appear devout, humble and meek. I shall conquer it, confiding wholly in the grace that Jesus Christ has merited for me by His death.

II. The most blessed Virgin fears that perhaps other soldiers, instigated by the princes of the Jews, will come

to take her most beloved Son from the cross, and to treat Him again with dishonor. Wherefore she begs Joseph of Arimathea to obtain leave from Pilate to take Him down and bury Him with becoming respect. He, therefore, being noble and rich, and a God-fearing man, goes at once with generous confidence to the governor's court, and paying no regard to the danger to which he exposes himself by incurring the hatred and persecution of powerful people among the Jews, asks for the body of Jesus crucified. He does not use language as though upbraiding the unjust judge, nor ask for the body of that Man-God at whose death the sun had been darkened, the earth had trembled, and the rocks been rent. He only says with modesty that he means the body of that poor Man of Nazareth; and so he actually obtains the gift, and by this gift becomes truly rich, and he returns to Calvary.

But before He is taken down from the cross, look well, my soul, at thy Jesus, crucified and dead, and see how He hangs naked in the air, mangled with scourges; pierced through His hands and feet with nails; struck through the breast with the spear, and with blood flowing from His most sacred wounds. This blood is all the blood of a God. Consider and reflect, what mean these words, *of a God*; and this also being blood altogether shed for thee in satisfaction for the remission of thy sins, consider and reflect, that thou hast been redeemed, not with money made of gold or silver, but with the most precious blood of a Man-God.

O my Saviour Jesus, only-begotten Son of God! was it worth the cost to pour out in this manner Thy blood for a vile and wretched creature? Since Thou wouldst have mercy on my miseries, was not one drop of that blood sufficient to redeem not only my soul, but the souls of all the world and of a thousand worlds? Why, then, shed it all even to those inmost drops which were in the midst of Thy Heart? I know what was Thy intention. It was to make me know how much Thou lovest me. But how shall I be able to correspond with Thy love?



Although I should give Thee all my blood, what is this animal blood in comparison with Thy divine blood, which is of infinite value? Ah, yes! I understand Thee. Thou desirest from me not my blood but my heart. I do not say this my heart of flesh, but the heart of my soul, which is my will. And of my will Thou desirest nothing but that it be animated and inflamed to imitate Thee in Thy holy virtues. Oh, how good art Thou, to ask of me a boon which is of more profit to myself than to Thee! I am determined to imitate Thee; and I shall imitate Thee, O my Jesus! in humility, in patience, and in every thing that pleases Thee the most. Thus I too shall find my own advantage. For woe to that soul which all this blood is not sufficient to warm to the practice of virtue. I will imitate Thee; but since my nature is weak, I pray Thee to strengthen me by the assistance of Thy grace, which is omnipotent.

The first virtue that Joseph of Arimathea undertakes to practise, in imitation of Jesus Christ, is fortitude against human respect, not to fear any danger of this world in the service of God. I will determine to arm myself also with this virtue, of which I stand greatly in need.

III. Joseph of Arimathea, having obtained the favor he asked of Pilate, returns straightway to Calvary, with his colleague Nicodemus, to take Jesus Christ down from the cross. Be attentive, O my soul! to observe how both of them first fall on their knees to adore the Son of God, then place the ladders, and go up, one on the right, the other on the left, to loosen the nails of the hands. They must use great force to draw those long heavy nails, which are thrust into the wood; but they succeed in doing it with reverence and gentleness. When was it ever heard that two gentlemen of quality went to remove a criminal from the gallows with their own hands? Yet these two feel themselves honored in mounting the cross to take down Jesus thence. While our meek Lamb was living, He was left to be handled and tormented by all sorts of people, vulgar and impious as they might be. Now that He is dead, He is touched by none but noble and just souls, who vie with one

another to do Him honor by their piety. In the Old Law, any one who touched the dead was counted unclean; but the Law is at an end. - He who can touch Jesus Christ believes himself thereby cleansed and sanctified.

The nails are removed from the feet of Jesus by Nicodemus. Meanwhile Joseph embraces and supports His body. What a happiness must be his to press to his breast the Saviour of the world! All then come to assist; among them Mary, who receives the nails, one by one, and the crown of thorns, and her Son Himself, whom she supports by the shoulders under the arms, while Magdalene holds those feet which had previously been to her the means of such marvelous grace. What tears, what words of poignant grief are heard; especially from the beloved Apostle St. John, while the blessed body is wrapped in a linen cloth and laid in the bosom of His most holy Mother!

And thou, my soul, why dost thou not go and bathe with thy tears those most sacred wounds? My Jesus, I dare not! Whilst Thou wast yet in the hands of Thy enemies, of Thy executioners and tormentors, I too could take my place in that company; but now that I behold Thee surrounded only by holy souls, who are admitted by Thee to a closer participation and taste of the fruit of death, I who am the most wretched of sinners can not draw near. I adore Thee at a distance. I implore Thee to make me worthy to approach and contemplate those wounds, which Thou hast received for me in Thy most pure flesh.

It is true that I am a most unworthy sinner; but remember, O my Saviour! that by Thy Passion Thou hast not only merited for me the forgiveness of my sins, but Thou hast moreover merited for me sanctifying grace, which may render me pleasing to Thy divine Majesty, and a share likewise of Thy own eternal bliss. Look, then, not on my demerits, but on Thy merits. Sorrowful Mary! intercede for me that I may be graciously heard; since I desire nothing but to be wounded in my heart, and to languish with love for Jesus; as Jesus was wounded and died on the cross for love of me.

Having now elected to be crucified with Jesus, I shall determine not to quit, while I have life, the cross of mortification, in imitation of Jesus, who was not taken from the cross until after His death.

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## CHAPTER LXXVI.

### JESUS CHRIST LAID IN THE ARMS OF HIS MOTHER.

I. MARY, sitting beneath the cross, holds her dead Son in her arms. As to comprehending the vastness of her sorrow at this time, we may indeed apply to it our thoughts, with what earnestness we please. We shall never arrive at it, except by believing that this sorrow reached the highest degree possible in a Mother like this, the Mother of such a Son. As she surpasses all in grace, in sanctity and in merits, so her immense suffering is proportionately greater than that of all others. If any one could look into her heart, he would see in it, as in a mirror, all the wounds of Jesus, and also a veritable image of His death.

Observe, my soul, this most afflicted Mother, pierced with the dart of love and sorrow through every point of her virginal breast. See how at one time she contemplates and bathes with her tears the head, the feet, the side and the other mangled limbs of her most loving Son; at another she kisses His forehead, His cheeks, His lips. Then with a handkerchief she cleanses His wounds and wipes off the spittle. Then she presses Him to her bosom with tender embraces. After which she gives vent to her grief by acts of love and compassion.

She has nothing to console her, except the knowledge that her Son is dead for thy eternal salvation; and she will change her sorrows into joy if thou wilt indeed save thyself. What, therefore, are thy thoughts? Instead of fine words of condolence, Mary expects of thee works worthy of eternal life. What sayest thou? Fly to Mary, and she will give thee not only the graces thou needest, but the Author of all grace Himself; that is, her own Son.

Oh, how much do I owe to thy charity and kindness, most loving and most lovely Virgin! As I look at Jesus in thy arms, methinks I behold the King of Glory on the throne prepared for Him, which is all mercy. And what hopes do I not conceive? Ah, thou Mother of thy God and mine! I have never yet experienced confidence so strong, so great as that which I now feel to obtain the grace that I have come to ask of thee. Ah! at least let some little of that plenitude of love which overflows thy heart fall on me. The sword of that love which thou hast for thy Son Jesus has not only fascinated thee, but it has covered thee with wounds, and entered and pierced thee through and through. Oh, happy me! if I too might be, however slightly, wounded with the point of this same sword! Gratify me in this my desire, holy Mother of love and sorrow; because if I thus love Jesus, I shall assuredly be saved; and in my salvation thou also wilt find comfort.

I shall cultivate devotion to the Dolours of Mary, and shall excite myself to the resolution of imitating her. Nay, I shall at once imitate her in the best way,—by making frequent acts of love to Jesus Christ.

II. In the Old Testament there was a law, that if the body of a man was found on the public road, murdered, the ancients of the place should come and wash their hands protesting that they were in nowise guilty of the crime committed. Now we have found on Calvary barbarously slain the body, not of an ordinary man, but of a Man-God named Jesus, and we ask who is the man guilty of this murder. Judas indeed betrayed Him; but he afterward retracted, declaring Jesus to be a just Man not deserving of death. Pilate has vindicated himself protesting his own innocence, and he will not have the crime laid to his charge. The Jews also have justified themselves, saying it is not lawful for them to put any one to death. Who then has thus cruelly killed with so many wounds this young Man of thirty-three years of age, who was the most beautiful, the most holy, the most lovely of all men in the world?

Come, my soul, and gaze upon this Son lying dead in



the arms of His most afflicted Mother. Canst thou, with a clear conscience, say that thou wast not the cause of His death, and that it is no fault of thine? Reflect with the light of thy faith, and thou wilt see that there is not one wound on that most sacred body which has not been the work of thy sinful wickedness. With the thorns of thy impure thoughts thou hast pierced that head. By thy licentious glances thou hast filled His eyes with blood. By thy immodest conversation thou hast embittered with gall that tongue of His. By foul, brutal pleasures thou hast covered with wounds His immaculate flesh; and by the depravity of thy desires, thou hast pierced through that purest of Hearts. Know, my sinful soul, that thine, wholly thine is the guilt of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ.

I behold the immense evil that I have committed, O my God! Never would I have sinned if I had thought of what I was doing when I sinned. What terror I experience, that I can not look at Thee dead without acknowledging myself worse than the Jews, Thy actual murderer, the author of Thy death! I lament for all my wickedness, and I also grieve that through my culpable tepidity I have not the grief that I should have. Why does not Heaven strike me dead with lightning? Why did not the earth open and swallow me when I sinned? How canst Thou, O Eternal Father! still suffer me to live, after having been the impious assassin of Thy beloved only-begotten Son? And thou, too, most holy Mary! why dost thou not let the angels of heaven and all the creatures of the whole world, take vengeance on me, since it is I who have crucified thy Son Jesus, and have pierced with the sword of sorrow thy most tender heart? I do not deserve that mercy should any longer be shown to me; and nevertheless, repenting of having sinned, I hope for it. The first token of honor that I shall give to my Redeemer is that I will hope in Him for life after having put Him to death. Jesus! I adore Thee, I trust in Thee, to Thee I sigh; and strengthened by Thy merits, in Thee I live and breathe once more.

In order to refrain from sin, I shall make three resolu-

tions, and they are: to resist temptations; to avoid occasions of sin; and to mortify my passions. Of the most blessed Virgin I ask the grace to make them practical.

III. While Jesus taken down from the cross is in the arms of His Mother, let us endeavor to make the mystery profitable to ourselves. Knowest thou, my soul, why He is thus exposed dead to be looked at and contemplated by all? This has been ordered by the most high God, who would thus give us a demonstration of His tremendous justice; and it must be understood to mean: Behold what it is to commit a mortal sin! It is an offence against the divine Majesty so grievous that the Eternal Father, to satisfy His outraged honor, has not spared His own Son. Notwithstanding the immense love He has for Him, He has punished Him with so great severity.

The decree of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ was already passed by the Ever Blessed Trinity from eternity, with the sole intention of punishing mortal sin. Since mortal sin is an offence committed against God by man, it could not worthily be repaired except by a Person who should be a Man-God. What an immense evil then must we believe it to be; for when we speak of a deadly sin we mean a sin that inflicts so painful and so ignominious a death on a God.

By the wounds of Jesus crucified and dead, the Eternal Father preaches to us on the enormity of mortal sin with a voice incomparably louder than He has ever done before, whether by the judgments that He has executed on the world, or by all the horrible pains of hell. Hence it is here, my soul, here at the sight of Jesus, in this deplorable condition, that thou hast reason to exclaim: *O what an immense evil is mortal sin!* It is an evil that should cause us more sorrow and fear than any other evil whatsoever. All sufferings, temporal and eternal, are evils of small account in comparison with mortal sin.

O Eternal Father! let this sermon that Thou deignest to preach to me have power, I beseech Thee, to penetrate the inmost recesses of my heart. To keep me from sin, Thou

dost use a thousand loving expedients ;—promises, threats, benefits, chastisements. All these indeed are strong and obligatory ; but there is nothing that compels with more rigid necessity of sinning no more, than the Passion and death which Thy only-begotten Son has endured for sin. At the remembrance of it, I ought to do nothing but weep. Will it be possible to remember it and wilfully to renew it by sin ?

O my God ! imprint profoundly on my soul the knowledge that Thou now inspirest me with ; and since of this Passion and death, which is an effect of sin, Thou hast made a most powerful remedy against sin, I pray Thee to give me the grace that this remedy may be powerfully applied to me, and may be effectual as well for the forgiveness of my sins committed, as for preserving me from those which I might continually commit through frailty and malice. I select for myself any suffering whatever of this world, and hell itself, in preference to mortal sin.

I shall, above all, remember the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, as a means to cause me to grieve for having sinned, and to safeguard me against sin for the future. This remedy is secure and easy ; and if I do not make use of it, the fault will be mine.

IV. Jesus Christ having shed His precious blood, and given His precious life as a ransom to redeem man from the slavery of Satan, let us think and reflect what there is in man of so great value as to be worth the blood and life of a God. Man, so far as regards his body, is a handful of dust, a bundle of misery, a subject of vanity, a leaf carried away by the wind. But having within his body a spiritual, immortal soul, created after the likeness of God, and destined to enjoy the eternal glory of this same God, it is in order to save this soul lost by sin that Jesus Christ has given His blood and His life. Of what value, then, must our soul be in the eyes of Jesus, Man-God !

Reflect, my soul ; and that thou mayest know thyself thoroughly, look well at Jesus, who for thee has poured out all the blood of His veins. Would He have suffered of His

own choice so painful and opprobrious a death for thee, if thou hadst been a mere trifle of refuse, not worth caring for? What, then, did Our Lord mean by giving thee so strange an evidence of the incomparable value and love that He has for thee? Only this, that thou shouldst learn thus to regulate thy conduct that it may be worthy of a soul so dear to God. And since God has done and suffered so much to save thee, thou shouldst also learn by this how much thou oughtest to value thyself, and shouldst be thankful to Him, and labor with all thy strength to obtain eternal salvation. Draw a contrast between the immense efforts that God has undergone to bring about thy salvation, and the trifling exertion that thou hast made for the same end—thy own salvation.

O my most loving Saviour! shameful indeed is my confusion on this account, especially, that, on the one hand, I see that Thou hast valued my soul more than Thy flesh, which being the flesh of a God was of infinite value. On the other hand, that I have valued more and loved more my sinful, worthless flesh, than my soul, though most deserving from me of all honor and love for its most beautiful and noble qualities. Senseless fool that I am! ought not this one reflection, that my soul is worth the blood and life of a God, to be more than enough to make me safeguard it with every degree of careful jealousy? It is no small guilt in me every time that I despise it and place it in danger of being lost.

My Jesus, my God! Thou hast often given me the grace to compassionate Thee in Thy Passion. Give me, moreover, some sentiment of compassion for my poor soul, which is in a most pitiful state. With what agonies hast Thou sought my soul, and this soul seeks everything but Thee! Can there exist a more unhappy being? Ah, my Redeemer! behold the soul which Thou hast purchased at so dear a rate. I restore it to Thee. I consign and recommend it to Thee, as a soul that is and should be wholly Thine. Take care of it, and by Thy grace conduct it to Thy glory.

I shall conclude with a will determined to love God, since



from loving God I come to love my soul and my body too. God alone can bring to bliss both soul and body.

V. Let us once more fix the eyes of our mind on Jesus dead, and laid in the bosom of His most afflicted Mother; and after reflecting how enormous an evil is mortal sin, since a God has died to cancel it, how precious is our soul, since a God has died to save it; considering, moreover, that Jesus Christ died to save us from the pains of hell, and to merit for us the glory of Paradise, let us draw the inference, how great an evil then must hell be, since a God died to save us from it! On the contrary, how great a good must Paradise be, since a God died to merit it for us! Was it worth while for the Son of God to die to save us from hell, if hell is a trifling evil? Was it worth while for the Son of God to die to merit Paradise for us, if Paradise is a trifling good? It is of faith that to the one and the other of those two ends the Passion and death of Jesus Christ was directed.

Reflect, my soul, what would have become of thee, if Jesus Christ had not died for thee. Thou wast without help, on the brink of a miserable eternity; and weighed down as thou wast with the burden of thy sins, thou shouldst infallibly have fallen into it. But Jesus Christ mercifully held thee back, and preserved thee from all danger. Moreover, when thou shouldst have been damned, He has assured thee that if thou wilt imitate Him thou shalt be eternally blessed. O soul! reflect well on what *Hell* means, and on what *Heaven* means; and how much thou owest to thy most merciful Saviour.

Ah, my Jesus! what thanks shall I ever be able to render Thee for Thy benefits to me, that are exceedingly great and infinite? Although I were master of the whole world and gave it all to Thee, I should give to Thee but very little in proportion to what I owe Thee. I know indeed my obligation, which is to love Thee with all the powers of my heart; and I know that with this Thou wouldst be content. But who besides Thyself can infuse holy love into me? O Thou who preventest me by exciting in me the desire to love

Thee, fulfil also in me this same desire; so that I may effectually love Thee; and love Thee with all the love that Thou desirest of me.

The one requisite for escaping hell and gaining heaven is this love. How wrong then I am, and how grievously I deceive myself when I lose hope, and imagine it too difficult a thing to obtain salvation! What can be easier than this, through the merits of the Man-God dead upon the cross for me? Look again and again, O soul, at Thy Lord Jesus Christ, and learn of Him. He has given Himself entirely for thee, in order to facilitate thy eternal salvation. If thou wilt lovingly give thyself wholly for Him, nothing more is demanded, therefore thou wilt be saved.

In order that my love may not consist in words alone, I shall do my utmost to imitate Jesus Christ; since on this imitation all depends. He who shall imitate Him will be saved. He who shall refuse to imitate Him will be damned.



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